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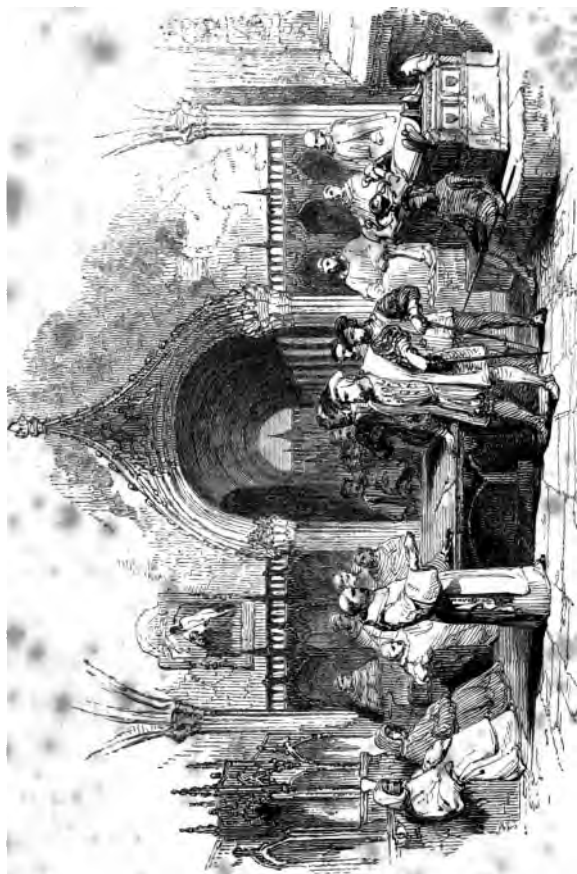
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SURRENDER OF THE ABBEY.



2

THE
Forest of Arden :

A TALE

ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE ENGLISH REFORMATION.

BY
THE REV. W. GRESLEY, M.A.,
PREBENDARY OF LICHFIELD.

New Edition.

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PREFACE.

THE approbation with which the "Siege of Lichfield" was favoured has encouraged me to attempt the following illustration of the English Reformation, which I hope to be enabled to follow up with a similar volume on the Revolution of 1688; thereby embracing the great epochs of modern English history.

These volumes are not intended to save young persons the trouble of reading the history of their country, but rather to encourage their researches, by calling forth an interest on the subject. What is attempted is, to throw light on history, by describing the manner in which private persons lived in former times; and so give a verisimilitude and reality to the incidents described, which many, perhaps, do not feel when they read in history only about kings and queens, and the affairs of state.

I have diligently endeavoured—what is no very easy task—to write on the Reformation without the spirit of partisanship, and to de-

scribe things as they were, so as neither to conceal the errors nor detract from the merits of those who were the actors in that great revolution.

With reference to the character of Latimer, who has been introduced in the following pages, it may be necessary to inform my young readers, who, perhaps, have been accustomed to hear high and just encomiums of that celebrated reformer, that the excellence of his character consisted rather in his honesty and zeal, than in the soundness of his views, or his theological attainments. He is a representative of that numerous class who, in their praiseworthy eagerness for reform, were apt sometimes to overstep the just bound of moderation. Less prominent in those eventful times, but not less worthy to be esteemed, were such men as I have endeavoured to depict under the character of William Arnold, the last abbot of Merevale—men of sound judgment and conscientious mind, who set themselves piously and soberly to correct their errors as soon as they became convinced of them, without imbibing that antipathy against the Romish Church, or yielding to that schismatical spirit with which so many eminent Reformers were infected.

THE
FOREST OF ARDEN.

INTRODUCTION.

The Church before the Reformation.

Not utterly unworthy to endure
Was the supremacy of crafty Rome ;
Age after age the arch of Christendom,
Aërial keystone haughtily secure.

WORDSWORTH.

It is not possible to form a just estimate of the character, motives, or even actions of those who live in any age of the world, without some knowledge of their previous history, and of the causes which led to the events described. One age grows out of another in gradual succession, and receives its impress from that which has gone before it ; even as a child inherits the features and character of its parents. Therefore, before adverting to the great events of the Reformation of the sixteenth century, it will be necessary to take a brief preliminary view of the previous history of the English Church, and of the rise and progress of those corruptions which required at the last such strong and convulsive efforts to cast

them off; and the very casting off of which was accompanied by so many prolific evils.

The Church of England was founded in the first age of the Christian era—as some suppose by St. Paul, or one of the Apostles : from which time down to the present it has formed a branch of the Church catholic, or universal ; has held the same creeds, enjoyed the same sacraments, and maintained the succession of its ministers unbroken. During its course it has gone through many persecutions, depressions, and revivals, and seen many corruptions and reformatations. At an early period the Pelagian heresy widely infected the Church of England ; but a reformation was effected through the instrumentality of St. Germaine, a Gallican bishop. In the fifth century the Christians were driven from the fairest portion of England by the heathen Saxons, who were themselves converted to the faith by St. Augustin ; and, in course of time, became united in one flourishing Church with their British brethren. Another terrible persecution was brought upon the Church by the Danes, who destroyed her establishments and well-nigh banished learning and civilisation from the land. From this miserable state the Church was raised by the exertions of the great and wise Alfred, and regained her ascendancy over the mixed races who inhabited England. But the continued wars and troubles of the times greatly weakened the Church ; and England, in common with the other nations of Europe, which during the same

period were equally barbarised by the invasions of heathen tribes, gradually lapsed more and more into the superstition and errors which characterised the middle ages. Not that "the dark ages," as they have been termed, were of that impenetrable blackness with which certain modern historians have been pleased to invest them; for in the worst times the flame of learning still burnt, though with a feeble ray; and we have ample evidence that the pure faith of genuine Christianity, little corrupted with the alloy of superstition, lived in many pious hearts. Still, the days were dark and lowering; and we can attribute it only to the special providence of God, and the instrumentality of the Church, that the Christian faith was preserved.

The Norman conquest was a new era in the history of the nation. By this time the pope of Rome had begun to exercise a powerful influence in Christendom, which, in the different contests waged between rival princes, or between princes and their subjects, each party was anxious to conciliate; and, for this purpose, was often willing to concede claims to a power which thus went on increasing to a monstrous extent. William the Conqueror, an unscrupulous politician, availed himself of the authority of the pope to prop his doubtful title, and drive out the ancient English clergy who occupied posts of honour or emolument. They were succeeded by a host of foreign ecclesiastics, who had their castles and retainers, and lived more like military chiefs

and barons than as Christian bishops. A vigorous prince like William was able to avail himself of the power of the Roman pontiff to effect his purposes ; but his less able successors became, in their turn, the instruments of the pope's aggrandisement. The great principle of popery,—that the Roman pontiff is universal bishop, and paramount over every other diocese,—was conceded in the reign of Henry I. by William of Corboil, then archbishop of Canterbury, who, in the vain hope to strengthen himself, accepted the office of legate to the pope—an office which the aspiring prelate soon transferred into other hands ; thus establishing a Church-officer superior to the archbishop, through whom he soon usurped the power of convening and presiding over synods and councils ; and so destroyed for a time the independence of the English Church. Another principal source of the influence of the pope was the rage for building monasteries, which arose, soon after the conquest, amongst the Norman barons. These monasteries became independent of the bishops in whose dioceses they were established, and subject only to the authority of the pope : thus being, in point of fact, places of schismatical worship. It was in the time of King John that the power of the pope attained in England its highest pitch of extravagance. During the reign of that weak and vicious monarch the whole of England was placed under an interdict ; that is, all the churches in the land were shut up, and the ordinances of religion discontinued ; the

altars were despoiled of their ornaments; the bells removed from the steeples; no religious rite was administered, except baptism to new-born babes; and the dead, refused interment in consecrated enclosures, were buried in ditches or common ground. All this continued for four years, by the order of a foreign bishop. The king himself was excommunicated, and his dominions given to the king of France. Nor was the interdict taken off, nor the excommunication removed, until John had resigned his kingdom into the hands of the pope, and had agreed to hold it thenceforth as feudatory to the Church of Rome, paying a thousand marks annually to the pope by way of acknowledgment. It should be remembered, however, that such monstrous usurpations as these were acquiesced in only by weak kings or ambitious prelates for their own private interests, and were never sanctioned by the English Church or nation.¹

A reader of the history of the middle ages is, at the first view, at a loss to account for the extravagant pretensions of the Church of Rome, and still more for the tameness with which they were submitted to by successive monarchs. We are accustomed, perhaps, too much to regard the Church of Rome as a mere mass of corruption and usurped authority. But it is not likely that the pope should have arrived at such a height of authority as to depose kings and bishops, and wield the whole power of Christendom, unless some moral influence had

¹ See Wordsworth's *Ecclesiastical Biography*, vol. i. p. 23.

been present beyond what appears on the mere surface. The secret was, *that the Church possessed in a great measure the affections of the people.* It had in each country the mass of the community as its devoted adherents ; and the cause of their devotion was, that they derived from it a degree of protection and benefit which was not afforded them by their temporal rulers. The fabric of ecclesiastical power, notwithstanding the un-catholic appendage of papal supremacy erected over the western division, was, in truth, the real Church of Christ, however debased and corrupted. It still spread its shadow over the nations like a mighty tree, and the fowls of the air lodged in its branches. Though its trunk was greatly decayed, its corruption had been so gradual, that no generation discerned how different it had become from the Church of the Apostles. It still retained not only the general outward form, but also the creeds and sacraments of primitive times ; and men perceived not that these had been crusted over with a mass of dross. Nay, it still was, in reality, the centre of religion. Whatsoever knowledge existed of a future state of being, of heaven and hell, and eternity ; whatsoever warning against sin was addressed to the consciences of men ; whatsoever impulse was given to holiness and devotion,—these were still derived from the Church. The Church was also the centre of charity. All that were troubled, and broken-hearted, and wearied with the din of the world, found an asylum in her arms. Her convents furnished, in the name of God, food

to the hungry, shelter to the afflicted, and rest to the weary. The warrior and the politician refreshed their world-worn spirit within her cloisters ; and the husbandman preferred the sway of the peaceful monks to that of the rude baron, who forced him from his home, and compelled him to fight in quarrels with which he had no concern. In short, corrupt as she was, *the Church was still superior, infinitely superior, to the world.* Whatever was reverent and pious was within her. She was the instructor and enlightener of the nations, so far as they had any light or instruction. No wonder that not only was she beloved by the poor and humble, but that the best of men then living, and men of practical wisdom no whit inferior to that of our own days, seeing in the world no better spiritual instructor or guide, were her zealous and devoted adherents. No wonder that the Church, thus based on the affections of the people, and supported by the zeal and talent of the wisest and best men of the age, should have exercised the vast authority which we have seen.

The history of the times will teach us, that often her most extravagant claims were founded on a basis of real justice. We are astonished that an Italian bishop should have the presumption to claim, or the power to exercise, a veto on the appointment of all the bishops in Christendom. But when we learn that William Rufus, during almost the whole of his reign, appropriated to himself the revenues of each bishopric which became vacant, and kept the offices them-

selves suspended, and that such was no uncommon practice amongst the monarchs of Europe,—we are the less surprised that, in the reign of his successor, the force of public opinion in his favour enabled the pope to gain the right of investiture. But for his interference, the Church would have speedily been deprived of her bishops altogether. Such is but a specimen of the mode in which the Church of Rome took under her protection nations ground down by the rapacity of cruel masters. “The good father of Christendom” was a protector to the people against the iron sway of their kings and nobles; and so established a moral influence, which, though capable of effecting much real good, yet, in the hands of unprincipled pontiffs, was too often exercised for the worst and most ambitious purposes.

Amidst the turbulence and ignorance of the middle ages, it is not to be wondered at that gross doctrinal errors should have crept into the Church. We cannot be too thankful to Almighty God that we live in an age in which scriptural truth is more fully known. At the same time, we should do well to recognise the inscrutable providence of God, whereby, amidst the general darkness, He preserved the truth entire; and to consider how the Church itself, corrupt as it was, proved the means of securing the blessed treasure. The very infallibility of the pope, monstrous as we believe the claim, was the obvious means of maintaining the creeds and sacraments, and general framework, of the Christian

Church entire ; while in the cells of her monasteries, whatever may have been their corruption, God provided that copies of the word of life should be continually transcribed and preserved ; which, in His appointed time, were destined to aid in the reformation of the Church.

The annals of the Reformation of the sixteenth century are the history of the mode in which, by a variety of instruments, and through an infinite number of concurrent means, God so arranged, that, in the general awakenment of learning and civilisation, man's self-willed spirit might be restrained within some bounds, and the Church, whose lamp had burnt but feebly, though it still had burnt, during ages of darkness, might, in a reformed and purified condition, shed the rays of its divine light over the awakened energies of the human mind.



CHAPTER I.

The Preacher.

"I smell a Loller¹ in the wind," quod he;
"Abideth² for God's digne passion;
For we sall have a predication,
This Loller he woll preachen us somewhat."

CHAUCER.

It was a fine summer's day, in the year 1535, when about noon two travellers entered the pleasant market-town of Kenilworth, and rode up to a decent hostelry called "the Virgins;"—the sign of which represented, in all the pride of a country artist's skill, two female figures, holding in their hands, the one a red rose, and the other a white—emblems of the now united houses of York and Lancaster.

One of the strangers was a man considerably past the middle age, habited plainly in the garb of an ecclesiastic. He wore a short cassock, for convenience of riding, and over that was loosely flung a cloak of dark cloth. A small Bible was fastened in a pouch to his girdle, and suspended from his neck by a leathern thong was an open pair of spectacles, ready for immediate use, when occasion offered to read the sacred volume. Though some-

¹ Wickliffite.

² Abide, stay.

what advanced in age, his frame was strong and robust. His grizzled beard was clipped, so as to give the appearance of a remarkable elongation of the face, and his mouth was partly hid by the length of his grey mustachios. On the whole, his features were of a homely cast, while, at the same time, there was depicted in them a strong indication of manly intellect and straightforward honesty of purpose. In short, it was a genuine Englishman's face—honest, open, and intelligent.

His companion had a foreign cast of expression ; and was evidently inferior to the other both in intellect and station. From his appearance and dress, he seemed to be a servant or dependant ; but from the kindness and familiarity with which he was treated, he was apparently more than a servant—"a brother beloved."

And such, in truth, was the relative condition of the two strangers. The first was Master Hugh Latimer, the reformer ; who, from his ambulatory habits and zeal in preaching the Gospel, has been called by his admirers "the Apostle of England,"—a name, however, which, much as we may like worthy Latimer's character in some respects, we would not be supposed to adopt as altogether suitable to him. The other was Austin Bernher, a Swiss, his faithful servant and friend, and the companion of many of his journeys.

The days of which we are writing were simple and homely, very different from those in which we

favour of the ejected monks and friars, and much blood was lost in various insurrections which ensued.

Such being, however, the anxiety of the people at the present time for information, we need not be surprised that the two travellers had scarcely finished their moderate repast, when Luke Sturley the landlord entered the small parlour with a most respectful bow, and declared himself the bearer of a humble request from the people without.

"May it please your reverence," said he, "the people be much pleased to see a preacher of the Gospel travelling amongst them, and humbly beseech that you will favour them by expounding unto them the word of God, forasmuch as there is somewhat of a plentiful lack of Gospel-preachers in these parts."

Good Latimer was never averse to preaching—to say the truth (since we all have our foibles), he was a little vain of his powers in that way, which, for the time in which he lived, were considerable. Though his sermons which have been preserved are any thing but a model either in style or matter, being strange, rude, rambling compositions, there was an earnestness in his manner, and raciness in his style, which won the attention of his hearers, whether high or low, in an age when the difference of refinement between the various ranks was not so great as it is at present.

Standing on the steps in front of the house, a

little raised above the concourse of hearers, Latimer took a rapid glance over his congregation, to see what it was composed of, applied his spectacles to his nose, opened the sacred volume, and began as follows :

“ Good people all, ye do well to seek to hear the exposition of God’s holy word. Mine host here telleth me that there be a lack of preachers in these parts, as there be in too many others. I heard of a bishop that went on a visitation, and when he came into a certain town, the great bell’s clapper was fallen out, so that he could not be rung in ; and the chief of the parish were much blamed,—the bishop being somewhat quick with them, and signifying that he was offended. Among the other was one wiser than the rest, and he comes to the bishop, ‘ Why, my lord,’ saith he, ‘ doth your lordship make so great a matter of a bell that lacketh a clapper ? Here is a bell,’ saith he, and pointed to the pulpit, ‘ that hath lacked a clapper this twenty year.’ So, ye see, there be other towns besides this that lack preachers.”

The people were wonderfully delighted at Latimer’s story, and still more by the zest with which he told it, and began to listen very attentively. “ Well now,” continued he, “ as I am to be the clapper to-day, I will begin with striking you a note from the gospel by St. Matthew. In the gospel according to Matthew, at the seventh chapter and at the twentieth verse, ye shall find these words : ‘ By their fruits ye shall know them.’ And now,

my good friends all, doff your hats, that we may beg a blessing on the word which I am about to preach to you, that it may enter into your hearts, and be effectual to your edification. And first let me see how many of you can say the Lord's prayer—not the old *pater noster*, but the prayer in English, that all may understand."

The people respectfully obeyed the injunction of the preacher; and the prayer being ended, Latimer began as follows. (It is not, of course, our intention to give our readers his whole sermon, but only the pith and substance of it.)

"The preacher of the Gospel," said he, "is like unto a plougher, for the diversity of work and variety of offices which he hath to do. As the ploughman first setteth forth his plough, then tilleth the land and breaketh it into furrows, and sometimes ridgeth it up again, and another time harroweth, and clotteth it, and dungeth it, and weedeth it, and maketh it clean,—so hath the preacher a busy work to bring the people to a right faith—not a swerving faith, but a faith which embraceth Christ and trusteth in His merits—a lively faith, a justifying faith, a faith which maketh a man righteous; now casting them down with the law; now ridging them up with the Gospel, and with the promise of God's favour; now weeding them by telling them of their faults, and making them forsake sin; now clotting them and breaking their stony hearts, and making them hearts of flesh, soft and apt to receive the good seed.

"Ye know that all are born in sin, by reason of the disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve. There is a natural venom or birth-poison in the veins of every man and woman. Moreover, all are burdened with actual sins of their own committing—priest and people, king and subjects; yea, the whole pack of us—all have sinned; and none can enter into the kingdom of heaven, nor obtain pardon of God, but through the digne passion and merits of His dear Son, who in His own body bare our iniquities upon the tree, and nailed our sins to His cross, to the end that all who believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (On these awful and essential points of doctrine, so much forgotten in those days, Latimer, according to his wont, enlarged at considerable length.)

"Moreover," he continued, "it is necessary that all who have in them this faith do shew forth the same by worthy deeds; for 'by their fruits ye shall know them,' as saith my text. How is it, good friends, that ye know a good tree from an evil one? how know ye a crab-stock from a pippin? Surely by their fruits. There is a proverb much used in my county of Leicestershire, *An evil crow, an evil egg*; and so it is in all things. I remember me once, my father, who was an honest farmer, did shew to me the various nature of land. 'This field,' said he, 'is nought, for it throweth up only rushes and lollies; this is good and wholesome for pasture; this for wheat or rye.' All do not give the same

crops ; but they which give good crops, though diverse one from another, are good lands ; and they that give bad crops are bad lands. So, good people, though Christian men shall not do all the same deeds, but each according to his talents and means, it shall be the best proof that their hearts be good, and their faith true, if they do good works ; but he that doeth bad works is nought. So much for the exposition of our text.

“ But some perhaps will say, what call you good works ? Be they not good works to build churches, and to give ornaments for God’s altar, and to gild and paint saints, and to set up candles, and to go on pilgrimages ? Yea, brethren, these be good works, acceptable to God, if they be done in faith ; but if they be not done in faith, they be nought. Neither be they sufficient of themselves. I promise you, if thou build an hundred churches, or give a thousand pounds for gilding of saints ; or if thou go on pilgrimage, measuring the way with thy body ; or if thou give candles as great as the biggest oak-tree in the forest of Arden ; and if thou leave works of charity and mercy undone,—these works shall nothing avail thee. The most glorious church ye can build is to offer your bodies holy and acceptable for the temple of the Lord ; the brightest light ye can kindle is the shining light of a pure and holy life.

“ This, ye say, is new learning : now I tell you it is old learning. Ye will be told it is old heresy new scoured : now I tell you it is old truth, rusted

with canker, and now made bright. It is new in so far as it maketh those who receive it to be new men; but it is old as the Apostles, and, moreover, is the doctrine preached by Hierom, Augustin, Ambrose, Hilary, and other learned clerks and doctors, when the Church was better and purer than it is at this present. But there be some fair trees that put up mere leaves and no fruit; and there be some fruits that look fair to sight, but are sour and bitter, and make one spit them out, bah! and there be some kinds of ale brewed by taverners which are clear and sparkling, but withal sour to the taste; even as there be some sepulchres that are white and fair on the outside, but within are full of dirt and rottenness. The whitest rochets do not always cover the purest hearts; monks and nuns are not all he-saints and she-saints; and there be relics of saints which men go a great way to visit, and be but pigs' bones after all: and as there be wolves in sheep's clothing, so there be foxes in friar's cowl"——

At this sally of the preacher (for Latimer could never refrain from his jest), the congregation, who had several times during his discourse given very evident signs of the relish with which they received his plain address, now turned their eyes with one accord on a figure which stood on a bench over against the preacher. He was habited in the garb of a friar, having his cowl partly drawn over his face, but not so as to conceal a pair of penetrating eyes and a red beard and whiskers, which gave him

so much the appearance of a fox, that the people at once understood Father Latimer's allusion.

"Ha, Master Reynard, how like you that?" said one.

"Take a note of that, Father John," said another.

The friar held his peace, and nodded to his friends among the crowd, not at all abashed either by the wit of the preacher or the joking of the audience. But when Latimer ceased to speak, as he did soon after, Friar John assayed to address the people.



CHAPTER II.

The Friar. The Pope's Supremacy.

A frere there was, a wanton and a mery :
In all the ordres four is none that can
So moche of dalliance and fayre langage.
Full swetely herde he confession ;
Ful plesant was his absolution.
He was an easie man to give penaunce,
There as he wist to have a good pitaunce.
There was no man no where so vertuous ;
He was the best beggar in all his house.

CHAUCER.

BEFORE introducing Friar John to my readers, I must very briefly describe the position in society which was occupied by the mendicant orders at the time of which I am writing.¹

There were four sorts of friars : the Franciscan, or Friars Minors ; the Dominican, or Black Friars ; the Carmelites, or White Friars ; and the Augustin, or Grey Friars ; besides other varieties. These men found their way into England about the middle of the thirteenth century. They pretended to renounce all worldly views, and to cast themselves on the alms of the people. Inveighing strongly against the corruption of the parochial clergy, they affected a

¹ For a fuller account, see chapter ii. of Blunt's *History of the Reformation in England*, and the authorities there referred to.

superior sanctity, which soon gained for them influence amongst the people. Their popularity brought them wealth, and they were before long in possession of flourishing houses, on which, as they were forbidden by their rules to hold estates, great profusion of wealth was lavished. The friars numbered many learned men in their body, obtained considerable eminence at the universities, and collected extensive libraries. Add to this, that they involved themselves in diplomacy and the intrigues of courts, and, being devoted to the interests of their patron the pope, they exercised the same sort of influence which in after-times was possessed by the Jesuits. The friars had permission from his holiness to preach where they would, without leave of abbot, priest, or bishop, with whom they were generally on no very good terms; they had a particular grudge against cathedrals; nor did they spare the monks. Meanwhile the love of the different orders of friars for each other was far from cordial. Their rivalry forms a frequent subject for the satirists of the age; so utterly untrue is the boast of the Romanist, that his Church is of one mind. It may well be questioned whether any modern sects have hated each other, or even the Church itself, with a more bitter hatred than these friars bore towards each other.

The occupation of the mendicants was to collect contributions by preaching through the country, carrying relics about, selling pardons and indulgences, visiting death-beds, confessing and absolving the

people: they were, in short, a band of voluntaries, who lived by their wits.

At about the time of which we are speaking, the arts of the friars had begun to be understood, and their influence was much on the decline: they were caricatured in every way—sometimes as foxes preaching, with the neck of a stolen goose peeping out of the hood behind; or as wolves giving absolution, with a sheep muffled up in their cloaks; or as apes sitting by a sick man's bed, with a crucifix in one hand, and the other in the sufferer's fob.¹ Still the friars maintained a certain popularity amongst the common people, from whose ranks they were generally taken, and with whom they associated on familiar terms. And though their sanctity and self-denial were very doubtful, they managed to make a tolerable living by various arts exercised upon the credulity of the people.

It was a friar Eremite of St. Augustin, from the friary of Atherstone, against whom, at the close of the last chapter, the wit of honest Latimer had been directed. He was clad in a long black gown over a garment of white woollen, fastened round the loins with a leathern girdle and a rude clasp of bone; on his head was a cowl, which, when he began to speak, he flung back, exposing a shaven crown. Friar John was not a bad specimen of his order—half knave, half enthusiast: he was a devoted adherent of the pope, and in tolerably good repute amongst

¹ See Blunt's History.

the people. Nor was he deficient in such learning as the times afforded.

"Well, sir," said he, when Latimer closed his sermon, "thou art a glib orator, forsooth, with thy new fantastical doctrine. Master Latimer, of Cambridge, could not have talked more arrant nonsense : but I doubt if thy head be equal to thy tongue."

The bystanders, who had eagerly listened to Latimer, now, with characteristic fickleness, applauded the bold attack of their old friend the friar ; nor was he without his partisans amongst the crowd to back him. However, Latimer was prompt to answer ; and a discussion arose between them, which soon fixed the attention of the people.

"I remember me of the time," said Latimer, "when I used to think that if I died in a friar's cowl, I was sure to go to heaven ; but I thank God, He has opened my eyes to such folly, and led me to shun hypocrisy, and put my trust on a sure Rock."

Friar John. "What call you the sure rock of our faith ? Did not our Lord Himself say unto Peter, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this *rock* I will build my Church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it ?'"¹

Latimer. It is most true.

F. J. "How is it, then, that your new teachers deny that the pope is lawfully to be obeyed in this realm ? Is it not so ?"

L. "Yes, truly ; we deny that the pope hath, or

¹ Matt. xvi. 18.

ought to have, any power, jurisdiction, or authority in the realm over kings, bishops, or people: we maintain that he has no just claim of jurisdiction but in his own diocese; and that he hath no more right to meddle in the diocese of Canterbury than my lord of Canterbury in his."

F. J. "Dost thou acknowledge holy Scripture to be true? or, peradventure, thou wilt deny even that?"

L. "No, master Friar; I believe all that is written in holy Scripture, and would fain keep to it."

F. J. "Art thou, then, bold enough to deny that Scripture declares the pope to be the head of the Church?"

L. "Nay, I cannot remember me that Scripture even once names the pope, much less says aught of his headship. Try again, good master Friar."

F. J. "I allow that Scripture says not aught of the pope under that name, but in speaking of St. Peter, who was the first pope——"

L. "Hold, I beseech thee. I deny that Peter was the first pope, or had aught to do with the pope-don. Thou art begging the whole question."

F. J. "I say that Christ marked Peter from the rest from the beginning, and gave him pre-eminence. Did not He, at the very first, go into Peter's boat before the rest?"

L. "Well now, thinkest thou that because the Lord went into Peter's boat, therefore He designed him to be pope, and head over the rest? I will answer thee according to my own experience. It

chanced one day that I went to Lambeth, and when I came to take boat to cross back again, the watermen came about me, as the manner is, and one would have me, and another would have me ; but I could take but one of them. Now, ye will ask, why I took one man's boat more than another ? Why, marry, because I would go in that which lay next to me, and was most convenient to step into. And so, for aught I know, was it with Simon's boat : it stood nearest the shore, and so the Lord got into it. Was not that sufficient reason ? But now come you papists and make a mystery of it, and pick out the supremacy of the pope from Peter's boat ; as if our Lord meant to say to Peter when He got into his boat, ' Peter, I do mean by sitting in thy boat that thou art to be pope of Rome ; and that thy successors after thee are to be universal rulers of the Church, and give away kingdoms ; and that princes are to hold their stirrups ; and that they shall be infallible, and guide the faith of all Christendom.' Ye may make allegories enough of every place of Scripture at this rate ; but surely it must needs be a simple matter which standeth on so weak a ground."

The people were mightily tickled with this mode of argument, and applauded vehemently.

"Howsoever," said Friar John, shifting his ground, "the question turns not on that text ; for there is clear proof that the Lord chose Peter from the rest, especially in the text I before named, in the which He said unto him, ' Thou art Peter, and upon

this rock I will build my Church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' ”

“ Nay, I can match that text with another,” said Latimer, turning over the leaves of the Bible. “ Hear what holy Paul saith to the Ephesians : ‘ Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God ; *and built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets*, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone ; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple unto the Lord : in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.’¹ Hence, good people, it is plain that Christ our Lord is the Corner-stone and Head of the Church ; and that, in so far as human materials were used in the foundation, the Church is built on the rest of the Apostles as well as Peter.”

F. J. “ Well, master, but thou hast some other tough texts of Scripture to get over, before thou canst prove that St. Peter is not head of the Church. Did not the Lord say to Peter, ‘ Behold, I give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven ? ’ Doth not this give to St. Peter the power to absolve from sins, and so open the gates of heaven to the penitent ? ”

L. “ True ; but the same power was given also to the rest of the Apostles. Look you here ; ” (and he

¹ Eph. ii. 19.

read from the 20th chap. of St. John): “‘ Then said Jesus to them again’ (that is to say, to all who were there, and not only to Peter), ‘ Peace be unto you : as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them ; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.’ I pray you therefore, good sir, what hath Peter received more than the rest ?”

F. J. “ Well, master, but you have not done yet : attend to this : ‘ Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me *more than these* ? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.’¹ Was not this said unto St. Peter more than the rest ?”

L. “ Thou art not bold enough surely to say that the rest of the Apostles are not bidden to feed the flock of Christ ? Yea, He said to all of them, ‘ Go and teach all nations, and baptise them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost : teaching them to observe and do all things whatsoever I have commanded you : and, lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.’² It is not Peter alone who is to feed the flock of Christ, but *all* the Apostles, and all Christian ministers to be ordained by them even to the end of the world. To them also Christ hath given commission to feed His flock, lambs as well as sheep, not only with pure

¹ John xxi. 15.

² Matt. xxviii. 19.

doctrine, but also with His blessed body and blood—even as holy Paul saith to the Corinthians, ‘The cup which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?’¹ No doubt they who love Him most will be most diligent to feed His flock. Peter was foremost in every good work. He was the first to make true confession of faith. He it was who first preached in the streets of Jerusalem, and began to baptise members into the Church. Peter was always the boldest and most zealous,—even as in a flock of sheep thou shalt always see one which leads the rest. And who, I would fain ask, best follow the steps of St. Peter in labours of love, in confessing the true faith, and feeding Christ's flock? Not the pope, I wot. Call you it feeding the flock of Christ when the pope of Rome interdicts kingdoms from the service of God, and invests bishops for bribes, and keepeth souls in purgatory, if money be not paid for them to be out, and causeth prayers to be made in an unknown tongue, and sells jubilees and graces, palls, bulls, pardons, indulgences,—call you that feeding the lambs of Christ? nay, I call it shearing them; what say you, good people?”

‘This was an argument to the pocket, which could not fail to tell with the people then assembled, and Latimer stood clearly on the vantage-ground. The friar, though disconcerted, was not abashed, but returned boldly to the charge.

F. J. “This is fine talking, master; but knowest

¹ 1 Cor. x. 16.

thou not that holy Church hath from the beginning held the pope to be the head? and now wilt thou dare set thyself above the universal Church?"

L. "Come, I am glad that thou allowest thyself to be fairly beaten out of Scripture; and I am not afraid to follow thee into Church-history; I am ready to meet thee on this ground also. I deny, therefore, that the history of the early Church teacheth that power was given to St. Peter or to the bishop of Rome above other bishops. The first council was summoned by St. James at Jerusalem, and not by St. Peter. The name of pope, or father, was given to all bishops, as much as to the bishop of Rome. And it is well known that the bishops of Antioch and Alexandria had the same authority in their patriarchates, as the bishop of Rome had in Italy. It is also ordered in the ancient canons, that no Christian bishop may exercise jurisdiction within the diocese of another against his will. Nay, the popes themselves did not claim the power which thou wouldst give them; but Gregory the Great himself declared, that to claim the title of universal bishop was blasphemous. It is true that, on account of the wealth and pre-eminence of the imperial city, the bishop of Rome came to have a great influence in Christendom; and I will grant this one thing—that, were I to attend a general council of the whole Church, I would give my vote that the pope, if he be an orthodox Christian, should take the president's chair; and, moreover, I agree that the pope shall have full power to give advice to

his brethren the bishops, or other Christian men who may think fit to consult him, provided always that he do not expect them to take his advice, if it be not good ; and that he do not insist on interfering with the dioceses of other bishops against their will, or with kings and their realms ; and provided also that he doth not exempt thee, master Friar, and thy brethren, from the lawful jurisdiction of your diocesan. Wilt thou make a bargain, and part company on these terms ?”

“ A bargain ! a bargain !” cried the people, apparently well pleased with the suggestion : and forthwith the crowd began to shout and strive with each other, as crowds will when they are closely packed together.

What answer the friar would have made is uncertain ; for at that moment, either by design or accident, the bench on which he had been standing was overturned, and the friar came to the ground. His friends were not slack to take his part, and hard blows and words began to be dealt around ; which might have ended in serious consequences ; but Latimer with his hearty and good-humoured voice begged them to desist.

“ Nay, masters, let us not end our friendly controversy in a brawl—that were but an ill conclusion. Try and carry home with you what you have heard, and think well of it, and take my blessing with you.”

By these words he allayed the anger of the contending partisans ; and having pronounced a blessing, he withdrew from the steps of the hostelry, on

which he had been standing, and the crowd gradually dispersed.

Before leaving the subject of the pope's supremacy, it should be noted that it was no mere question of opinion, but was the practical point on which the political parties in the country were at that time divided. It was just about the time when Henry VIII. had come to an open rupture with the pope; and, in spite of the threats and remonstrances of his holiness, had put away Queen Catharine, and avowed his marriage with Anne Boleyn. The pope's name had been erased from the liturgy, and the king's inserted in its place; and the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome in England had been formally disclaimed by the bishops and clergy of the English Church in convocation assembled.

The emissaries of the pope, chiefly friars of the mendicant orders, were busy in the country stirring up opposition to this change. Prophecies had been spread among the people, that if the king was divorced from Catharine, and married to Anne Boleyn, he would not live a month; and various other means had been taken to spread a spirit of disaffection and insurrection, which in many parts of the country had led to riotous excitement.

The king had found it necessary to take strong measures, in order to repress the rising discontents. Three Carthusian friars had been hung as traitors in the habits of their order; and the lord chancellor, Sir Thomas More, and Fisher, bishop of Salisbury,

had lost their heads on the scaffold on the charge of treason: though pardon was offered them, if they would have acknowledged the king's supremacy. Henry was not a man to swerve from his course. He gained his point, where many a less resolute monarch had failed. Whether, in destroying the authority of the pope, he did not at the same time institute, in his own supremacy, an equally dangerous power over the Church's liberties; or whether the Church was then, or has been since, capable of self-government; or whether rather the providence of God has not mercifully placed her for a while under restraint and durance, until she shall have become purged of her schismatical temper,—are questions into which we will not now enter. Time, perhaps, is the only solver of these problems.



CHAPTER III.

The Wardmote.

Then they cast on their gownes of grene,
And took theyr bowes each one ;
And they away to the grene forrest
A shooting forth are gone.

Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne.

AFTER leaving Kenilworth, with its fair castle and monastery, behind them, the course of our travellers still lay through the part of Warwickshire which has been generally designated by the name of Arden—a name significative of its woody or forest-like character ; though the exact limits of the forest are not very easy determinable. The heat of the day was past ; and as they rode on, at an easy pace, amongst the oaks and glades, the somewhat excited spirits of the worthy reformer began to subside, and calmer reflection to take their place.

“ ’Tis no easy task, good Austin, which we have before us, to disabuse these poor folks of the superstitions which have so long blinded them. The influence of the friars, and other emissaries of the pope, is not like soon to give way. Saw you not how the fickle multitude changed their tone so soon as my sermon was done, and that bold fox began to utter his wily speeches ? ”

"Nathless," said Austin, who was a predestinarian in his creed, "that which is the will of God He will bring to pass, spite of Satan and his wiles."

"True, Bernher; but it will require all the zeal and courage of God's true servants to do His work. The king hath been brought over to favour the reformed faith by the influence of Queen Anne; but I much fear me that is a slender reed to rest on—we must not put our confidence in princes. The prayers and deeds of all good men are needed. I have devoted my life to the task of reforming the Church of its abuses; and come what will, whether success and advancement, or spoiling of goods, imprisonment, or the fire of Smithfield itself,—I am resolved to persevere, through God's grace, unto the end."

Austin Bernher warmly declared his determination to follow his master's steps in life or death.

They were now on a rising ground, and saw at their right hand, at a few miles' distance, the fair spires of Coventry; and further on, the "tall and costly" steeple of Astley Church, commonly called the "lantern of Arden," being an "eminent landmark on that part of the woodland, where the way was not easily hit." On their left lay Balsall Temple, formerly a preceptory of the Knights Templars, before that body was suppressed. These were a military order—half monks, half soldiers—who won great fame by their valour and devotion. The object of their first foundation was to protect pilgrims

from spoil and robbery by thieves, in their passage to and from the Holy Land. They took their name from their first residence, which adjoined the Temple of Solomon at Jerusalem. Their first settlement in England was in a street called Holbourne, then in the suburbs of London. Afterwards they built a house and a church in Fleet Street, which still retains the name of "the Temple." They obtained vast possessions in various parts of England. At length, having fallen off in their devotion and popularity, the order was suppressed by the pope, at the beginning of the fourteenth century; and their possessions given to the Knights Hospitallers, another order of a similar character—half military, half monastic.

Passing onward over Balsall Heath, the travellers again plunged into the hill and woodland, and in a short while arrived at the pleasant village of Meriden. Here, on a piece of level turf embosomed in oaks, at a short distance from the village, they descried a large concourse of people, engaged, as it appeared, in some rustic sport.

It was the grand Wardmote, or day of meeting of the Woodmen of Arden, held, according to custom, on the festival of St. Bartholomew; at which the yeomen and gentry from the country round were gathered, for the purpose of practising the noble craft of archery.

In those days, a meeting for the purpose of archery was not a mere holyday pageant for the fair and

gay ; but rather a matter of earnest business, though partaking also of the character of a social meeting. The assembly consisted of the stout yeomen from the country round, as well as many of the neighbouring gentry. The greatest interest was excited in these trials of skill ; and the praise bestowed on the conqueror was such as ensured a good and earnest competition.

Henry himself took great delight in the exercise of shooting ; and drew as strong a bow, and shot to as great a length, as any yeoman of his guard. The long-bow had indeed for many ages been a favourite weapon of the English. It had won them many battles in former days, and recently had contributed mainly to their victory over the Scots at Flodden Field. At the present time, the bow, as a weapon of war, had begun to be rivalled by the arquebus. But it was the confident opinion of the best authorities in those days, that, of the two kinds of artillery, fire-arms would not be found in the long-run so useful as the bow ; chiefly on account of the damage which the former took from rain ; whereas the bow might be kept dry in its case until the moment when it was required for use. It should be remembered, however, that, besides the bow, the archer was armed, for close quarters, with a bill, or battle-axe, which, wielded by an English arm, did terrible execution.

Latimer, besides his love of cheerful amusement

and companionship, had been in his youthful days a practised follower of the woodman's craft. No sooner, therefore, did he perceive what was the object of the assemblage, than he trotted up to the spot, threw his bridle on his horse's neck ; and, with somewhat of youthful ardour, and with less of gravity than accorded with his ecclesiastical habit, he left his steed with Bernher, and joined the throng of spectators.

Though at another time his appearance would have excited attention, yet so intent were the bystanders upon the sport, that Latimer could scarcely get a word from any of them. It was just at the critical moment of the match. The clouts, or small targets, at which the woodmen shot, were placed at twelve score yards apart. Eleven ends, the stated number from clout to clout, had been shot ; and two of the competitors were equal, having each marked four. The rest of the archers were thus placed *hors de combat* ; and the two, who were hitherto equal, were on the point of shooting a match to determine which should be the conqueror.

The first who stood forth was a fine-looking man, evidently of some station from the richness of his dress—for in those days the dress of the different ranks was strictly limited by law. He wore a coat of rich green velvet embroidered, and a chain of gold, which indicated that, if not of noble rank, he had at least a clear yearly income of two hundred

marks value over all charges. His hat was looped up with a brooch of rich jewels. He was dark in feature, handsome, and bold, but withal not amiable-looking. He drew his bow with a vigorous arm: the shaft took a low range, considering the greatness of the distance, but the bow which sent it was strong, —and the arrow reached its mark. A murmur of approbation passed through the crowd.

“ Well done, Clifford! that will do!” said one.

“ A little too much powder, my lord of Badsley,” said another.

And so it was; the pricker marked it a bow's length over. The lord of Badsley swung his bow round with a gesture of impatience, and something like an oath escaped his lips, while an increasing sternness overspread his features.

“ Never mind,” said Clifford's friends—for there are always two parties on such occasions,—“ it will take a good shot to beat that at twelve score.”

Clifford moved from the station of shooting, and his place was occupied by a tall young man, whose chestnut locks curled over a handsome countenance with a pleasing though grave expression. He was evidently a perfect master of the art: he drew his bow with singular grace; the arrow took a higher range than that of his opponent, which was against him, for at that moment the leaves on the upper branches of the oaks quivered with a gentle breeze, which was sufficient to drive the arrow slightly from its course.

It fell a bow's length wide of the clout; and the marker, after some deliberation, signified that he was uncertain which of the two was nearest.

"Measure for first—measure for first," cried the bystanders, becoming more and more interested as the doubtfulness of the issue increased.

Clifford strove hard with his second arrow to mend the first shot, and did so, but a little too much; it beat the other two, but fell half a bow short.

"Now, Master Neville, it is your last chance; try your best," said the backers of the latter gentleman.

Maurice Neville seemed disposed to lose no advantage. The breeze was still rustling in the trees, and he waited till it was past, engaged in choosing an arrow with rather less feather than the first; then, with a firm and vigorous hand, he drew his shaft to the head, and loosed it: a moment's suspense ensued as the arrow described its parabola; and then the pricker, who stood by the clout, fell down on his back, kicking and struggling as if in mortal agony. This was to intimate that the arrow had struck the mark.

"Bravely done—bravely done! The prize is yours; and you deserve it," said a hundred voices.

As the party of woodmen were now leaving the ground on which they had been shooting, one of them, a young man, came running towards Latimer, and grasped him cordially by the hand.

"Worthy sir," said he, "I am right glad to see you. We hardly expected you till to-morrow; but you have just come in time to see our sport."

"Yes: and to see your brother Maurice make a right good shot."

"It was well done, was it not, sir? that last shot deserved to make him master forester. But come, if thou wishest to see a goodly sight, let us away to the bower; where, if we lose not time, we shall witness the fair queen of the forest reward the conqueror."

Latimer accordingly accompanied his young kinsman Robert Neville; and, having passed through the throng, they arrived at an open tent or canopy, erected under the spreading arms of a noble oak—such as are seen in few places but in the strong soils of Warwickshire. It was indeed a gay sylvan scene. The woodmen were grouped together in their green uniforms, with low hats and feathers—the whole dress not unlike that which is now worn by the yeomen of the guard, or beef-eaters, except that it was of less gaudy colours; and the right side of the green cap was looped up with a button of silver, in order to give free space for drawing the arrow to the ear. Several of them were decorated with medals, richly carved with wreaths of oak-leaves, and other devices,—the trophies of former victories. Amongst them was a knot of ladies, and young persons in their holyday attire, who had come

to witness the sports of the day. In the midst, on a sort of throne above the rest, sat the queen of the forest, who had been selected to honour the festival, and to confer the prize.

And, to say sooth, she was well worthy of the distinction, being as fair a creature as the sun often shone upon. She was in the first spring of womanhood, and appeared scarcely to have reached her eighteenth year. Her graceful figure was set off by a kirtle of green silk ; her head, according to the maidenly fashion of the day, was uncovered ; and her light auburn hair was braided and fastened with ribands : her clear, lustrous, laughter-loving eyes cast a radiance around, which, while it won admiration, gave also the notion that the fair lady was well aware of the homage which she might expect. It was evident that she was filled with a girlish elation at her temporary distinction ; yet there was withal so much of feminine grace and loveliness in her demeanour, that few would have been disposed to think her manner vain or unbecoming.

At the feet of the queen knelt the handsome woodman, the hero of the day, who had so well deserved the prize, and who for grace and manly beauty was well matched with the fair maiden. The young lady held in her hand a massive silver bugle, with a baldric of buff leather, studded with silver ; and placing it on his shoulder — “ Most worthy sir,” she thus addressed him, “ as queen of the forest, we

hereby invest you with the prize which you have so well deserved ; and trust that you will well and safely keep the precious charge, and demean yourself as a worthy woodman. Maurice Neville, rise up Master Forester."

The hero thus addressed rose from his knees as he received the prize from the fair lady's hands ; and with courteous accent thus replied : " Highly as I value, most gracious lady, the honour which I have this day gained amongst my brother woodmen, my greatest pleasure is to receive the prize from hands so fair. Suffer me, fair lady, thus to acknowledge my sense of the favour which I have received ;" and again kneeling, he took the hand of the youthful queen, and respectfully pressed it to his lips.

It was altogether a goodly sight—the queen of the forest was worthy of her high estate ; the master forester no less worthy of his honour. Something of coquetry and love of distinction might, as we have already hinted, be perhaps detected by a keen observer in the manner of the fair one ; but the bystanders marked only her grace and beauty, and all acknowledged that she had done her part bravely.

One man alone looked on with a sad and dissatisfied mien ; this was the unsuccessful competitor, Marmaduke Clifford. He leaned against the butt of the oak, with the discontented air which might have been expected from one who was foiled when he had so nearly been victorious ; but there was something

in his look which would have induced a bystander to believe that, if Clifford gazed on the scene with an air of bitterness, it arose from some deeper cause than the loss of a silver bugle.



CHAPTER IV.

Butt-shooting, and other Matters.

"At what a butte now wold ye shote,
I pray thee tell to me?"
"At suche a butte, syr," he sayd,
"As men use in my countrie."

Then he drew out a fayre brode arrowe,
Hys bowe was great and longe :
He set that arrowe in his bowe,
That was both styffe and stronge.

*Adam Bell, Clym of the Clough, and
William of Cloudesly.*

THE sports of the day were not yet finished. The grand match being over, and the prize awarded, some of the company, who came from a distance, began to take their departure; but the more eager archers remained for further amusement. The master forester sounded a few notes on his bugle, and a cry arose amongst the archers—"The butts—the butts!"

Butt-shooting, as anciently practised, was a very different thing from modern target-shooting. In these degenerate days a great target is set up, almost as large as a barn-door, with five concentric circles and a bull's-eye of gold, at which our ancestors would have called it child's play to shoot. The old butt-shooting was of this sort:—three butts, or heaps

discerne whereat they would shoot ; another waggeth the upper end of his bow one way ; another will stand pointing his shafte at the marke a good while, and, by and bye, he will give him a whippe, and away or a man witt. Another maketh such a wrestling with his gere, as though he were able to shoot no more as long as he lived ; another draweth softly to the middes, and, by and bye, it is gone you cannot know how ; another maketh a wryninge with his back, as though a man pinched him behinde ; another cowereth down and layeth on his buttocks, as though he should shoot crowes ; another setteth forward his left legge, and draweth back with head and shoulders, as though he pulled at a rope, or else were afayed of the marke. Ones I sawe a man which used a bracer [or guard] on his cheke, or else he had scratched all the skinne of the one syde of his face with his drawinge hand ; another I saw which at every shote, after the loose, lifted up his right legge so far that he was in jeopardy of falling. Afterward, when the shaft is gone, men have many faults which evil custom hath brought them to ; and specially in crying after the shaft, and speaking words scarce honest for such an honest pastime. Such words be token of a very ill minde, and manifest signs of a man that is subject to immeasurable affections. Some will take theyre bow and wryth and wrinche it, to pull in his shaft when it flyeth wide, as if he drave a cart ; some will give two or three strydes forward, daunsinge and hopping after the

shafte as long as it flyeth, as though he were a madde man ; some, which fear to be too far gone, runne backward, as it were to pull his shafte backe ; another runneth forward when he feareth to be too short, heaving with his arm as though he would help the shaft to fly ; and another swynges his bow about him, as it were a man with a shaft to make room in a game place ; and many other faults there be which now come not to my remembrance. Thus many archers with marring their face and countenance, with other parts of theyr bodye, as it were men that daunce antiques, be far from the comely porte in shooting, which he that would be excellent must look for."

The honest woodmen of Arden were certainly not exempt from these diverse "faults and commodities" incident to archers. They enjoyed, however, their honest pastime, in happy ignorance of the satire preparing for them in the mind of "the noted, amiable, learned, and facetious Roger Ascham."

"I know not, worthy sir," said Maurice Neville to Latimer, "whether you indulge in the sport of archery ; but if you will honour us by joining in our pastime, here is a bow much at your service."

"Many thanks for your courtesy," said Latimer : "I have been an archer in my time, though I have not drawn a bow this many a day, and therefore lack practice ; yet I should like to have one shot, if it be but to see whether I have forgotten my craft. This is a good bit of Spanish yew," said he, taking

the bow which was offered to him, and feeling its strength; "give me a good shaft to match, and I will see what I can do." Having received the bow and shaft, he passed his practised eye over them both, to see if all was right; slightly altered the string; next smoothed one of the feathers of the arrow, which was a little ruffled, and rubbed a few particles of dust from the shaft-head; then nocking the shaft, he placed himself firmly on the ground, and looking keenly for a moment at the mark, he drew the arrow to the head, holding the bow-arm firm as a vice, and giving his body to the draft in the true English fashion. Twang went the string, and the arrow struck the peg in the very centre of the card. "Now, good archers," said he, delivering back the bow to his young friend, "when you have beat that, I will have another shot."

"You have soon gained your verdureship, worthy sir," said Maurice. "Will you not take a few more turns with us?"

"Excuse me," said Latimer; "the evening wears apace, and I hope to reach the abbey of Merevale ere sunset. I must therefore, with many thanks for your courtesy, now bid you farewell, wishing you much pleasure and contentment."

So saying, he left the throng in quest of Bernher; but he was followed by his kinsman Robert Neville. "I am myself bound for Merevale," said he; "and if you will be troubled with my company, will gladly be your guide through the forest; which by

a stranger may not easily be threaded. Maurice bids me say that he would have accompanied us, but his newly won honour requires him to marshal his brother woodmen, and to attend the behests of the queen of the forest."

Latimer begged his young friend not to leave the sport on his account; but seeing him resolved to go with him, he accepted his company with many thanks. So they rode away together.

"And how fares my good friend the abbot of Merevale?" said Latimer. "It is a long day since I have seen him, though we were close chums at Cambridge."

"He is passing well in health; but somewhat downcast by the prospect of affairs."

"No wonder—no wonder."

"The times bode no good to abbots; and perhaps I need not tell you," said Robert, though in a somewhat lower tone, "that Father William, abbot though he be, is inclined to believe that the reformed doctrine has much truth in it; and he is not the man to maintain error against his conscience."

"No; his letters shew that plainly. He talks of reforms which he has himself introduced into his convent."

"Many wholesome reforms he has already made; and would do more, did he not meet with much opposition in these matters."

"As might have been expected; reformation cannot be accomplished all at once. Well, tell me

now," he continued, apparently anxious to change the conversation, "how do matters fare at Cambridge? Thou hast just gained thy degree, I hear, and acquitted thyself right well, as becometh a pupil of Father William. What are they doing in that learned place?—canst tell me?"

"The last thing they did, just before I left, was to make a rare bonfire of the works of Duns Scotus and St. Thomas Aquinas. You might have seen the burning leaves of the old schoolmen flying about the quadrangle in all directions. The *Dialectics* of Aristotle and Rodolphus Agricola are to take their place in future. Philip Melancthon, too, is to be read."

"Ah, well, mighty well! but they might have read Aristotle and Melancthon without burning St. Thomas. There is much good in the schoolmen, though some trifling. Howsoever, the friends of the schoolmen have but their just reward; for I have heard the Scotists bark like curs against all classical learning, and declare that every Terence and Virgil in the world ought to be burnt. But I pray you, Master Robert, what art thou—a Greek or a Trojan?"

"Oh, a Greek, to be sure."

It should be observed, that just at this time a violent feud had arisen in the universities as to the study of the Greek language, which had before been little known—the popish party affirming that it led to heresy, and the Reformers, on the other hand, approving it. The abettors of the opposite parties were called respectively Greeks and Trojans; and

their disputes were so violent, that they sometimes came even to blows, and fought together with the greatest animosity. The monks were generally true Trojans, and at this time had a clear majority, though the Greeks were fast gaining ground.

"Ay, I thought thou wert a Greek; and, I warrant me, hast broken the heads of some score of Trojans in thy day."

"Nay, good sir, I like not brawling; and only defend myself when attacked."

"Well, that is but fair."

At this time, turning a corner of the road, they came in sight of a company of persons, some on foot, some on horseback, returning, as it appeared, from a fair or market; and Latimer recognised amongst them his antagonist, Friar John, with whom he had recently been engaged in controversy at Kenilworth.

Latimer greeted his rival good humouredly as he passed; and the other returned his salutation, though with some bitterness, adding, that he hoped for an opportunity of trying another conclusion with him one day.

"That is as troublesome a knave," said Robert Neville, "as any in the country. He belongs to the friary at Atherstone, hard by Merevale; and he is one of those who stand up for all old abuses, because they have an interest in them. He goes up and down the country to blow up a discontent against the reformed faith. Besides, he is crafty as well as

active; and, I fear me, will work some harm one of these days."

"These be the men," said Latimer, "who, if God save us not, will prevent the necessary reforms from being made without trouble. Thou wilt wonder how I came to know the man; but I will tell thee."

He then recounted to his companion the dispute which had taken place between them in the morning, and continued:—

"There be men of this sort, emissaries of the pope, in all parts of the country. I'll tell thee a story of one. There was an old Oxford divine, though no great clerk, near my living of West Kingston, called Hubberden, who went about the country railing against the new doctrine, as he called it, and striving to deface and impeach the springing of God's holy Gospel. This man rode about in a long gown draggling in the mire down to his horse's heels; and, at last, passing by a churchyard, and suddenly lighting from his horse, he ordered the bells to be tolled; and when the people were come, he began to rail against Luther, Melancthon, Hugh Latimer, and other heretics, dancing and flinging himself about in the pulpit like mad. How he stamped and thumped the pulpit, making all sorts of histrionical gestures, I cannot relate to you; until, all on a sudden, crack went the pulpit, and down comes Hubberden, sprawling in the midst of the aisle. But it was no laughing matter; for he so

broke and bruised his old bones that he never preached after : and there was great blame laid upon the churchwardens for not making the pulpit stronger ; but one of them, a shrewd man, got himself out of the scrape by a merry joke, excusing himself, for that their pulpit was made *for preaching, not for dancing in.*"

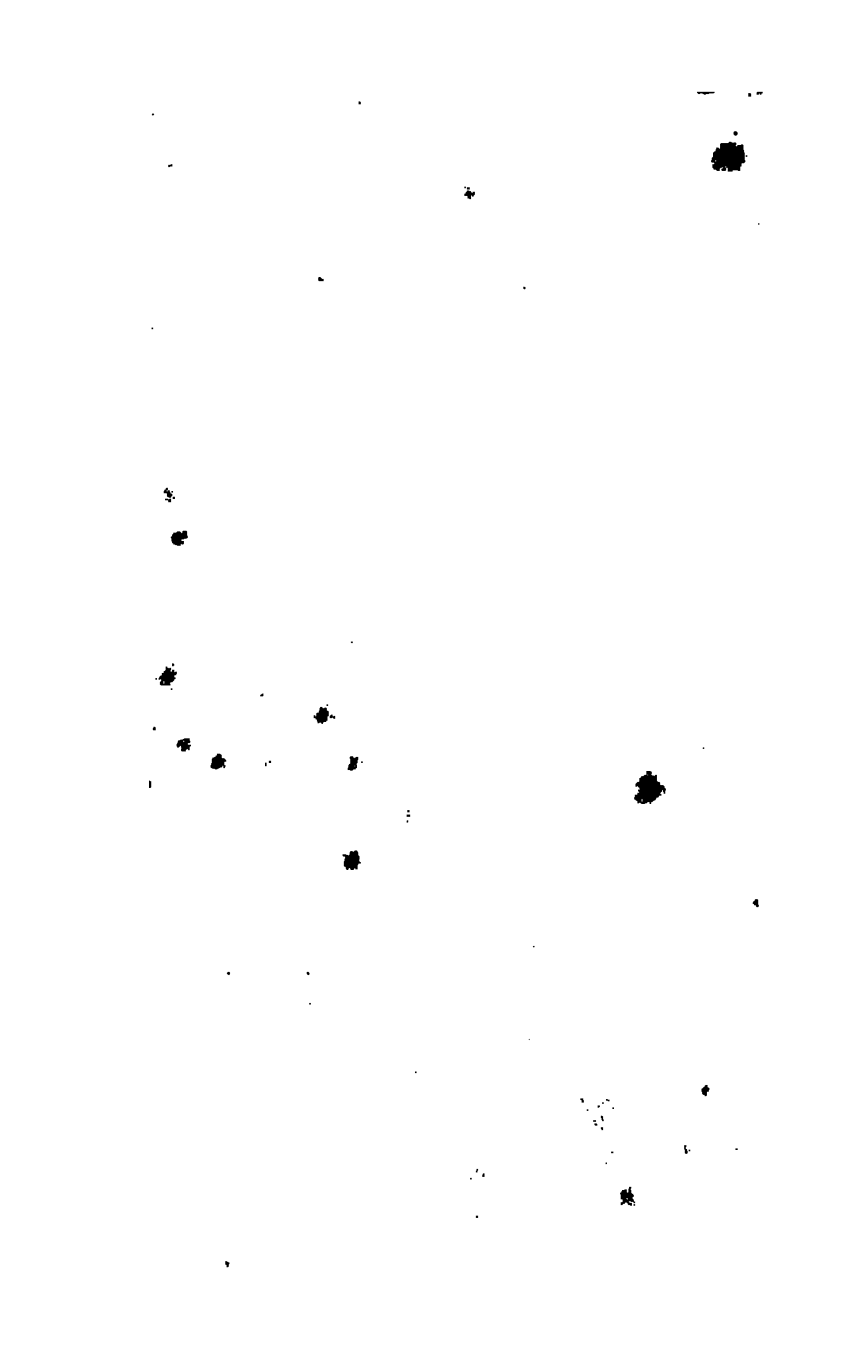
Thus in pleasant discourse the travellers beguiled the way, until, just as the sun was dipping below the horizon, they came in sight of the venerable abbey of Merevale, embosomed in the midst of woods. Descending the hill-side, they could distinctly hear the sound of music and the solemn chorus of voices, as the monks chanted the compline, or second vespers :

" Now, through the charmed air
 Slowly ascending,
 List to the chanted prayer
 Solemnly blending.
 Hark ! hark ! it seems to say,
 Turn from vain joys away
 To those which ne'er decay,
 Though life be ending."

We are wont to connect the idea of vespers with Romish superstition ; but surely most unwisely. Can we conceive a more pious custom than for Christian people to meet together at close of day, and join together in chanting the Psalms of David, ordered by the Church ? When shall we learn to

distinguish between Romish abuses, and customs which, though they accord little with the self-indulgent, irreverent manners of the present day, are in themselves most pious and laudable?







MEREVALE CHURCH, EAST END.



CHAPTER V.

The Abbot of Mervevale.

Who with the ploughshare clave the barren moors,
And to green meadows chang'd the swampy shores ;
Thinned the rank woods ; and for the cheerful grange
Made room where wolf and boar were used to range ?
Who taught and shew'd by deeds that gentler chains
Should bind the vassal to the lord's domains ?—

The thoughtful monks.

WORDSWORTH.

ON arriving at the abbey, the travellers found the gate closed, as was usual at sunset ; but, after a short time, they obtained admittance through a small side-postern, which was opened by the porter ; and by him they were conducted into the parletory, or guests' chamber,—a small room, with panelled walls, decorated with a few paintings of our Lord and the blessed Virgin, with illuminated halos of glory round their heads, after the old reverential fashion. There were also several saints and founders of orders, very tolerably executed ; copies, probably, of good paintings of the Italian masters ; which, though inferior in colouring and skill to the productions of a later school, yet exhibited a beautiful purity of design and heavenly expression of countenance, and were of far

higher character and sentiment than the voluptuous and carnal productions of the subsequent age.

While Latimer was looking round the guest-chamber, Robert Neville went to inform the abbot, as soon as vespers were over, of the arrival of his guest.

William Arnold, — or Father William, as he was commonly called, — the last abbot of Merevale, was a man of sense, learning, and piety, rather than of shining abilities. Though not formed for court-intrigues, nor for the ambitious schemes in which Churchmen of former ages too often engaged, he was well adapted for ruling his convent with firmness, and at the same time conciliating the esteem and winning the affection of those whom he ruled. He eschewed dicing, hunting, and costly banqueting; and was content to live as a good abbot is described — “separate from the intremeddlyinge of worldly thinges, and to serve God quiettlye, and to distribute his faculties in refreshing poor indigent persons; to have a vigilant eigh to good ordre, and rule of his house, and the flock to him commytted of God.” Every day he attended the duties of the chapter and the greater mass, stimulating the others by his spirited chanting; and on the greater and simple feasts, he assisted indefatigably at matins, compline, and vespers — reading the lesson, singing the responses, beginning the *Te Deum*, standing with those who stood according to their turn, and animating the whole choir by his example. He preached

often, diligently attended the sick-beds of the dying, and made a point of himself performing the funeral service over the remains of each departed brother. In a word, his heart was in the duties of his station. He had been an intimate and valued friend of Latimer, with whom, though his senior, he had formed an acquaintance at Cambridge; and the companionship of youth had ripened into a permanent friendship, though circumstances had thrown the friends into different spheres. In common with Latimer, and with many heads of religious houses, he was sincerely anxious for a reformation of abuses. He had read and thought enough to discern plainly the unscriptural character of many of the prevalent usages; and he was far too upright and conscientious a man to maintain abuses of which he was cognisant, even though their maintenance might be for his interest. At the same time, biased as we all are by the circumstances in which we are placed, it was not likely that the Abbot of Merevale should be quite so quick to discern, or so hasty to remove, abuses as his somewhat impetuous friend. Father William did what a conscientious and sensible man would have done under his circumstances,—he corrected the abuses of his own convent as soon as he discovered them; doing what he could by his own authority; and where his own authority was doubtful, endeavouring to prevail on his chapter to act with him, though not always able to accomplish his wishes to their full extent. He kept the vicars of

the neighbouring parishes, who resided at the convent, to their work ; himself not unfrequently going over to preach in their churches. He took measures for the endowment of the poor livings, from which the abbey received the impropriate tithes, with a sufficiency for the maintenance of a resident minister. He established scriptural lectures in the chapter-house. He maintained a vigilant watch over the morals and discipline of his own fraternity ; and more than ever eschewed intercourse with his hot-headed and mischievous neighbours, the Friars Eremite of Atherstone, with whom he had never been on very cordial terms.

Notwithstanding these prudent and proper arrangements, the mind of the abbot was sometimes filled with anxiety, when rumours reached him, through various channels, concerning the progress of events ; and hearing that his old friend Latimer had arrived at some eminence, and mingled in the great world, he had several times written to him, to ask his counsel, as well as to seek information ; at the same time expressing a hope that he might be induced to visit him at his monastery—an invitation which the latter was not unwilling to accept, both for the sake of renewing acquaintance with his old friend, and visiting his kinsfolks, who lived in the immediate neighbourhood.

While Latimer waited in the locutory, the compline service, or second vespers, were prolonged beyond the usual time, it being the festival of St.

Bartholomew, at which the abbot himself officiated ; and a solemn procession was made through the aisles of the chapel, the chanters going first with tapers, the abbot next, then the whole convent following in due order. The service being at length finished, the benediction given, the altar duly censed, and the abbot himself censed also, he returned to the vestuary, where he found his young pupil and *protégé*, Robert Neville, waiting to inform him of the arrival of Latimer. Hastily laying aside his alb and cope, his gloves, ring, and crosier, he went immediately to the guest-chamber ; and, after a hearty welcome, took Latimer with him to his own private apartment.

We need not describe the meeting of the two college friends ; no doubt it was much the same as meetings between warm-hearted and sincere men always have been, and always will be. Let us, however, proceed to record the conversation which ensued between them, after the first greetings had been exchanged, and the hospitalities due to a traveller had been provided by the cellarer.

“ Well, my good friend Arnold, or rather, let me say, most worthy Abbot of Merevale, I am right glad to see thee hale and hearty ; though, I must say, thy hair is somewhat greyer, and thy face less plump, than when I bade thee last farewell.”

“ I think I may even say the same of thee,” returned the abbot. “ We have both had our cares

and anxieties. You, I am told, have had some trouble with the late lord archbishop and his council. It was about the time of the sufferings of our poor friend Bilney."

"Ah, Bilney—little Bilney! that was a sad story; he was a simple and kind soul. How many pleasant hours have you and I passed with him at Cambridge! He was a true Christian, and sufferer for the faith. Poor fellow! he was cast down and daunted at first, when questioned for heresy; but afterwards he revived, and bore his faggot manfully, and took his death patiently. Woe will be to that bishop who had the examination of him, if he repented not! I would not have to answer for his sins."

"It is a dreadful thing to think of;—but how fared it with thyself?"

"Marry, I too had a sharp trial. Much prayer and supplication did I make, and much guidance did I need. I yielded all I could with a safe conscience, and had almost prepared myself for Smithfield. Had not God inclined the king to favour me, I verily think I should have followed Bilney to the stake."

"Alas, alas, the times are perilous indeed: I pray God may shorten them."

"His mercy be praised! I trust that the reformed faith has now free scope, and will no longer suffer persecution. 'Tis wonderful how He works by means which one would not have thought on."

"The reformed faith is, as you say, free from

persecution ; and long may it be so ! But much I fear me lest the tide of persecution set the other way."

" Truly, there is danger of it ; and it is for that cause partly that I have accepted thy long-sent invitation to visit thee here, that I might confer with thee touching the difficulty of the times : believing that possibly I have means of knowledge in matters political, such as thou, at this distance from court, canst not come at ; whereby in some sort I may aid thee in steering thy course."

" Thanks, good Latimer ; thou hast done the part of a true friend."

" I well know that we may speak freely together, and that our sentiments are alike so far as regards the need of reform ; though thou, as an abbot, may not entirely agree with me as to the mode of meeting the difficulties. Let us speak our minds openly ; for though on all points we may not concur, yet our speech may be confidential, and per-adventure profitable. Thou seest, then, good Arnold, that a great step has been taken by the king and parliament in their refusal of obedience to the power of the pope. The realm is rescued from his tyranny."

" It was an usurped power, surely," said Abbot William, " and contrary to the ancient canon. Nevertheless, I grieve that we should seem thus in a manner separate from a Church to which we owe so much as that of Rome ; 'tis a misfortune, though the step be necessary. Yet I am willing

to think that our Church, while throwing off the authority of the pope, and placing herself thereby in some sort in a state of separation as regards a large portion of Christendom, is nevertheless in communion with the holy Church universal. I would fain believe that the departed saints would not blame us for breach of Church-union; and that even upon earth, though not acknowledging the pope our master, we still retain the succession from the Apostles, and so are united with the Head. The Church universal is not the body of Christians who happen to live in this or that particular generation; but the saints also and righteous men who have lived and died in every age. We have fellowship with those who have departed this life, as well as with those who still live upon the earth; and therefore, though we continue not in actual communion with Rome, yet if we keep the true faith and succession, we still remain a branch of the holy catholic and apostolic Church."

The abbot, a learned man, as well as a pious Churchman, dwelt strongly on these points; and set forth that which was the true view of the case. Latimer, in common with many hot reformers, thought little of the evil of separation, in comparison with the need of reformation; and though not disposed to dispute the worthy abbot's doctrine, proceeded to what he considered more practical subjects.

"The supremacy of the pope is, as I may speak, abolished in this realm: the question is, what next

step we may look for. And now I come to speak of what concerns thee principally. 'Tis time, my good friend, that thou set thy house in order."

"I see plainly whither thy discourse points. Rumours have already reached us, that some strong measures are likely to be taken as respects the monasteries, and that we are like to be mulcted pretty largely."

"It is even so. Nay, more than thou perchance imaginest. The king speaks of abolishing some of them, as I learn confidently from the Lord Cromwell. It is much spoken of, that the revenues of monasteries might be made more useful to the nation, if employed in founding schools and colleges."

"Is it, then, really true, that the king has in his mind to seize the property of the monasteries?"

"From what I learn, there remains little doubt that such is his purpose; and when the king takes a thing in his head, he is not soon diverted from it."

The worthy abbot appeared much moved at this intimation. At last, after a short silence, he rose from his seat—"I would fain ask," he said, with some warmth, "on what plea the property of the monks may be seized, for the wants of the king or the nation, more than that of other men? I will shew thee, friend Latimer, the deeds and muniments of our abbey, in order that thou mayest see whether there be any flaw in our title, or whether it be not as lawful and good as that of any baron, knight, or franklin in the realm."

So saying, the abbot took from his girdle a key ; and walking to the farther side of the apartment, he touched a secret spring, whereupon one of the panels in the wainscot slid back, and discovered an iron door fixed in solid masonry. The door being unlocked, there appeared an almary or arched recess of compact brickwork, so constructed as to be impervious to fire, in which were kept certain valuable articles belonging to the abbey. An ancient crosier inlaid with ivory and silver, several massive cups or chalices, divers shrines of silver or filigree-work containing relics, which, though the abbot no longer exposed them to public gaze, he still preserved with reverence. Beside these there were ranged in piles various cases of title-deeds of many of the neighbouring gentry, as well as those of the abbey. One of these the abbot moved from its recess, and placed on the table ; then, after closing the door, he unlocked the case, and took from it several bundles of parchments well preserved, but evidently of very ancient date. " These," said he, " are the deeds whereby the estates of the abbey have been conveyed to it by the grants of pious founders, and confirmed by the sign-manual of kings. But, before unfolding them, I would fain shew thee a brief account of the foundation and origin of our abbey, which was drawn up from more ancient documents by my good predecessor Abbot Dugaldus of blessed memory, who delighted to employ his leisure hours in searching into the ancient history of our abbey."

With that Father William untied a document, which, from its appearance, was evidently of more recent date than the rest, and arranging his spectacles he read as follows.



CHAPTER VI.

The History of Merevale Abbey, by Father Dugaldus.

While cloister'd piety displays
Her mouldering roll, the piercing eye explores
New manners and the pomp of elder days,
Whence culls the pensive bard his pictured stores :
Nor rough nor barren are the winding ways
Of hoar antiquity, but strewn with flowers.

*Sonnet on Dugdale's Monasticon,
by J. Warton.*

I, DUGALDUS, by the grace of God abbot of Merevale, in order that the history of this house and of its pious founders and benefactors of blessed memory may not fall into oblivion, have with care and labour drawn up this account of its first foundation, and of all memorable particulars relating thereto from the beginning, which I desire may be kept for ever amongst the muniments of the convent.

The original founder of Merevale Abbey was the noble Robert Earl Ferrers, a great man in these parts ; of whose worthy family and origin it is meet to say somewhat, seeing that they had fair possessions both in this and other parts of the realm.

The first of that name who settled in England was Henry de Ferrers, son of Gualcheline de Ferrers, a Norman ; which Henry having a great proportion

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of land, by the Conqueror's gift, lying in the counties of Berks, Wilts, Northampton, Hereford, Warwick, Leicester, Gloucester, Nottingham, Derby, Essex, and Stafford, seated himself at Tutbury Castle in Staffordshire, near unto which he founded a goodly monastery for Cluniac monks, endowing it with large possessions. To which Henry succeeded Robert, who commanded the Derbyshire men in the famous battle near North-Alverton, in the third year of Stephen, where the king had a glorious victory against David king of Scots; and for that service was advanced to the earldom of Derby, but died the year following (1139), leaving issue Robert his son and heir, who styled himself Robertus Comes junior de Ferreriis; and likewise Comes junior of Nottingham. Which Robert being a good and pious man, and willing to offer to God of his substance for the increase and propagation of religion, and having a reverent esteem for the Cistercian monks, which in his time began to multiply in England, made choice of Merevale, as being a mountainous and woody place, fit for solitude and devotion, to found a monastery of that order: and having thus been the pious founder of the above-named abbey of Merevale, in the thirteenth of Stephen, he died, and lyeth there buried, wrapt in an ox-hyde.

"Wrapt in an ox-hyde!" exclaimed Latimer; "what meaneth that? 'tis a strange recompense for all his pious deeds."

Father William. "It was the custom to embalm

the bodies of noble persons, or rather to salt them, and wrap them in leather or hides. The body of Henry I. was 'salted with moche salte, and at last closed in a boole skynne.' Let us pray that our worthy founder may rest in peace, and his good deeds be had in remembrance, and his soul saved, for his Redeemer's sake."

Latimer. "It is a pious wish, in which I grudge not to join with thee; albeit there may be much doubt whether the prayers of the living be profitable for the departed."

The abbot seemed disposed to controvert this position of Latimer, and laid the parchment on the table; but after a moment's pause he resumed it, and continued: "Well, now thou shalt hear the deeds of conveyance here transcribed by the worthy father, whereby the estates were given and confirmed to the monastery: the originals are on the table before thee, and thou mayest compare them, if thou wilt."

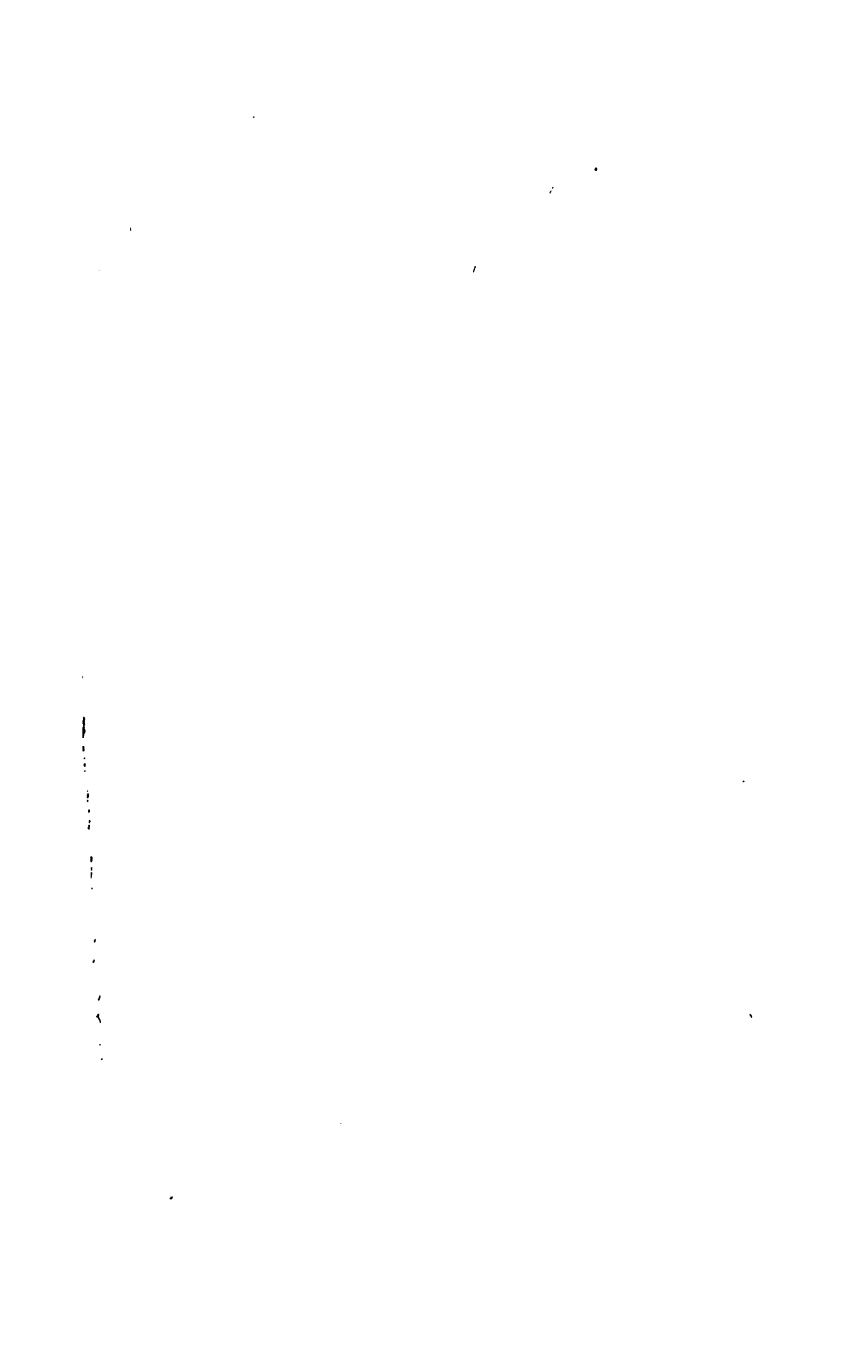
Charter of foundation.

To Roger, bishop of Chester, and all sons of the holy Church, Robert, count of Ferrers, greeting.

Know ye that I have granted for the soul of Robert, count of Ferrers, my father, and for the health of my own soul and that of my wife, to God and the blessed Virgin, and to the church of Merevale, for the purpose of building an abbey of the Cistercian order, all my property in the forest of Arden (*totam forestam meam de Ardena*), and whatsoever I possess in Wyttington and the manor of Weston, and the manor of Overton (Orton



Brasses in Merevale Church, supposed to represent the founders.



on the Hill), and one Herdewick in the Peak (*unam Herdewican in Pecco*), also Crannockstoune, with common of pasture in Hertendon and Pilsbury for sheep and other cattle.

Witnesses :

RICHARD PECK, Archdeacon.

EDMUND and HUGO FERRERS.

WILLIAM DE SEYLE : and others.

Confirmation of the above Grant by Henry II.

Henry, king of England, duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, count of Angiers, to the archbishops, bishops, &c. greeting.

Know ye that I have granted and confirmed, for the souls of King Henry and my other ancestors, and for the health of my own soul, and of my mother the empress, and my wife the queen, and of my children, to God and St. Mary, and the monks of Merevale, all that grant which Count Robert of Ferrers hath given them for charity to build a certain abbey of the order of the Cisterrians. Wherefore I will and firmly order that the aforesaid monks shall have and hold all their lands, with all their appendages of whosoever fee (*de cujuscunque feudo*), and all their possessions, rightly and peaceably, quietly and freely, from all secular custom, as any other church in all my kingdom.

The deed goes on to release them from all secular imposts, and confirm to them all donations from other sources ; and all purchases and acquirements in wood or plain, in meadow or pasture, in rivers or pools, in mills or minerals, and all other things ; especially reciting certain grants made to them by

Gerard de Lunese, Walter de Canwell, and Radulph and Paganus de Baskerville. It thus concludes —

Moreover, I desire that all who love the health of my soul shall love and succour that abbey.

Witnesses :

THEOBALD, Archbishop of Canterbury.

BISHOP OF CHESTER.

THE CHANCELLOR.

Given by my hand at Tamworth, the 12th day of March.

“It seems hardly fair,” observed Latimer, “that the king should thus have appropriated the benefits of this charitable grant to the good of his own soul and that of his kindred, when Count Robert of Ferrers intended it for the souls of himself and family.”

Father William. “Such, however, was the custom of those feudal times. Men believed their temporal and eternal interests to be more mixed up and blended with those of their brethren than we do now. They were more dependent, but at the same time less selfish than their descendants.”

“Here,” continued the abbot, “is a bull of Pope Lucius the Third, whereby the above grants are confirmed to them, together with divers others—as the Grange of More (now called More-Barne), Seile, Little Petling, the church of Overton on the Hill, with the chapels of Twicross, Grendon, Copshull, and Baxterly; also a grant of two messuages and three shops, and twelve shillings rent in Leicester, by Petronell Oliver of Leicester, to find a priest for

the celebration of divine service for the soul of the said Petronill, her ancestors, and all the faithful deceased; also a messuage and a yardland in Bentley, bestowed on them by John de Lisle, then lord of the manor, to find fifteen tapers in the chapel of our Lady, near the gate of the abbey. There be various others; all of which, together with those already recited, thou wilt see are lawfully conveyed to the monks of Merevale. But these were after the first foundation."

Father William then went on to read portions of the manuscripts of Father Dugaldus, in which were set down the various incidents relating to the foundation of the monastery and settlement of the monks, and many particulars which occurred in or near the monastery.

As the style of the abbot is rather prolix, a brief summary of the principal points on which he touched may be sufficient for our present purpose.

After the grant was made, and the various estates given by the charitable earl, and those afterwards to be granted, were secured to the abbey of Merevale then about to be founded, the next thing was to "propagate" the order; that is, to procure a colony of holy men, who should form a nucleus for the establishment. This was accordingly done, by sending for a certain number of Cistercian monks (how many is not specified) from Bordesley abbey, in Worcestershire.

We can picture to ourselves the good monks (for

what reason have we to suppose they were otherwise?) arriving to take possession of their new property. Their first step would be to make a survey of their estate, and choose a fit spot for their future residence. The choice of the monks lighted on a pleasant meadow embosomed in woods, just at the point where the rough hilly country approaches the plain. Here, on a gentle eminence beside a small stream which watered the meadow-land, they determined to erect their habitation. On this spot the busy monks proceed to mark out the ground for their chapel; for, as we read of Abraham, their first object on each change of residence was to rear up an altar to their God; and we ought to remember with gratitude that many of our parish churches, as in the case of Merevale, were first built as chapels to monasteries. Whether, if we had not received these legacies from them, we should have built churches equal to them in beauty, or whether, in some cases, we should have built any at all, may well be considered.

The exquisite remains of ancient monasteries which exist in the present day prove that the monks possessed no ordinary skill in architecture. They were in general their own architects; and their eminent success in that art was the result of the enthusiasm of religious ardour, brought to bear both on the design and the workmanship. The worthy monks of Merevale were not behind their brethren, as the specimens of their labours still remaining attest.

The more skilful amongst them formed the plan of the new building ; others set diligently to work, some carrying hods of mortar, some assisting to hew the stone, some felling timber for the roof—sparing themselves, in short, no trouble by which they might further the work. The important point of the site of the chapel being arranged, and the building commenced, they proceed in due order to group around this primary and central object the various other buildings necessary for their establishment—the dormitory, refectory, chapter-house, cloisters, library, scriptorium for writing, the sutrinum for making and mending clothes, the kitchen and other offices, bakehouse, brewhouse, workhouse, dovecote, and other outbuildings. These being planned and begun upon, they set about damming up the water, for the double purpose of making ponds to supply them with fish for their days of fasting, and also of affording a reservoir which might be sufficient to work their mill. Next to this, they lay out their herbary and orchard, and plant mulberries, fig-trees, and stocks, which in the year following may be grafted with cuttings of choice fruit, brought probably from some more southern clime.

Having completed their home-arrangements, they proceed to cast their eyes beyond their immediate neighbourhood, and choose a place for their grange or farm. Here they construct their farm-buildings, and begin to clear the land of timber, and to plough and sow, and drain those parts which are moist and

Such are some of the habits of the old monks whom I have described as taking up their abode amongst the hills and dales of Merevale; and thus did the providence of God out of partial evil bring forth good. And whether it was from remorse of conscience, or superstition, or ostentation, or real piety, whether on his death-bed, or when in robust health, that Robert earl of Ferrers gave—not half an acre for a site, which is now thought a handsome donation—but several manors, in order that the Cistercian monks might offer masses for his soul, and for the soul of his wife and father,—the result was, that, by the blessing of God, a Christian colony was formed in the midst of a wilderness, where men, possessed of as much learning and knowledge as existed in those days, lived peaceably together, spreading civilisation and industry around, furnishing an asylum to many a wounded spirit, food and shelter to many a houseless wanderer, medicines to many a sick neighbour, and affording instruction in religious duties, according to the belief of the age.

It is not to be denied that we have been looking on the fairest side of these monastic establishments: but it has been the fashion so contemptuously to abuse them, that we may be excused for dwelling a while on their virtues and their usefulness. True, that great abuses crept into many of these monasteries, chiefly through their being exempted from episcopal control; but were they greater, or half so great as those which existed in the same period in

the baron's castle? True, that the monks, if they fell under lax discipline, were apt to get into lazy and bad habits; but were these habits more lazy and bad than those of many of the well-doing and wealthy in the present age of comfort and luxury? Have our English gentry, who live at home at ease—have the loungers at our watering-places—our listless continental travellers, who desert the duties of their home and station, and loiter away their summers on the banks of Lake Lemman, and their winters in the luxurious environs of Naples—nay, I would almost say, has the most indefatigable man of business, who consumes his days in amassing wealth for himself,—have these men any right to sneer at the habits of the old monks? I think not. Of all charges, that of self-seeking and luxury is brought forward against any set of men with least grace by the present generation.

Before concluding the history of the monks of Merevale, we must make one more extract from the narrative of Father Dugaldus, relative to an event which caused much trouble of mind to many successive abbots, and under which they suffered more or less down to the time of their dissolution.

“About this time,” he says (in the reign of Edward III.), “there was a certain mansion-house for devotion, given by Ralph Lord Basset of Draiton unto the friars which are called Friar Heremites of St. Augustine, hard by at Atherstone; so that certain of them, thrusting themselves in, began to inhabit

that place, to the great annoyance of the abbot and convent of Merevale; and as it were by the example of the other order, called Minors, (which, in former years, at Dunstable and at St. Edmundsbury in Suffolk, had practised the like matter, contrary to the wills of the abbot and convent there), they began to build a great sumptuous house; so that in the eyes of the beholders such chargeable work of building, so suddenly advanced by them that professed voluntary poverty, caused no small wonder. The said friars, building them a church with all speed, began to celebrate divine service, not once staying for any license; and so building from day to day, they obtained great aid of such as inhabited near unto them, of whom the abbot and convent of Merevale ought to have the revenues, which were now converted to be employed on the said friars towards their maintenance. And thus by how much the more *their* house increased, so much the more did the abbey and convent decrease in dues and offerings.”¹

This was a sore subject, and often alluded to by the historian of Merevale. And no wonder; for what was it in his eyes but the erection of a dissenting chapel, and the establishment of a body of sectarians?

¹ This is Hollinshed's account of a similar institution at Dunstable.

CHAPTER VII.

Question of Dissolution of Monasteries.

There is a simple plan;—
That they should take who have the power,
And they shall keep who can.

IN the time of Henry VIII. the feeling with regard to monasteries was greatly changed. In the first place, there were too many of them—one fifth of the soil was said to be in their possession. This, however, was an exaggeration. Then, they had much declined from their original strictness and good order. However utterly unfounded were the larger portion of the stories which were raked up against them, still it is certain that the zeal and industry of former days had too generally departed from them.

But, again; now that men began to read the Bible more carefully than heretofore, it was found that many practices used in the monasteries—such as the worshipping at the shrines of saints either real or supposed, and the offering up prayers and masses for souls in purgatory—were superstitious and unscriptural.

These things were noted by good men; and

many, like Latimer, inveighed strongly against them ; while their accusations were eagerly caught at by the ungodly, who were ready to scoff at holy things when the restraint was removed ; and by the covetous, who looked with a hungry eye upon the rich pastures and fair estates which the monks had brought into cultivation.

All who have studied human nature well know what different conclusions are arrived at even by honest and intelligent men, whose views and principles are not unlike each other, but whose situations are different. Latimer and Father William were both conscientious men, and both in favour of a reformation of the abuses of the Church : but the former was a parish-priest and an university-preacher, who had long accustomed himself to declaim against Church-abuses ; the latter was head of an establishment to which he was attached by habit, and moreover, the rights of which he had sworn to defend. This will account for the turn which their conversation took.

“ There can be no doubt, worthy Arnold,” said Latimer, when the abbot had finished reading to him the manuscript of Father Dugaldus,—“ there can be no doubt that the property of Merevale abbey belongs to it by right, as lawfully as the estates or goods and chattels of laymen belong to their respective owners. Howbeit there are certain reasons why it may not be deemed unjust to deal with it, reserving always the right of the actual holders.”

The Abbot. "I pray thee, what may be these reasons?"

Latimer. "First, thou knowest that the manors and estates held by abbeys and monasteries are very excessive; not, as was most unjustly stated, one half of the land of the country, but as much as one fifth."

A. "Nay, I doubt very much whether they be near what even thou sayest. Those who rob them will be sorely disappointed as to the amount of their plunder."

L. "In any wise, thou wilt allow that the lands of the monks are the richest and most productive in the realm."

A. "And what hath made them rich and productive, I would fain know, but the industry of those very monks, from which thou wouldst now take them?"

L. "Yet it hath been deemed that the possessions of the monks are so excessive, that a statute of mortmain hath been passed in parliament, whereby in future no man may lawfully bequeath estates to abbeys or monasteries: and if it be lawful for parliament to prevent the increase of that which is excessive, it may also restrain the excess which has grown up."

A. "Nay, I discern not the justice of thy conclusion, good Latimer: it may be well to prevent such bequests in future, but not lawful to take that which has been already given."

Latimer knew not precisely what to answer to

this position. Questions of abstract justice are not much heeded by men whose minds are made up to the expediency of a certain course. He went on, therefore, to another topic.

L. "It appeareth from the documents which thou hast just read, as also from those of most other abbeys, that the estates were given to them for the performance of services which a better knowledge of Scripture shews us are not right nor holy; I mean especially, the offering up of masses for the liberation of souls from purgatory, the which, as thou thyself wilt agree with me, is not authorised by holy Scripture, but rather repugnant to the same."

A. "I allow thee, that there be many things heretofore done in monasteries which are superstitious and unscriptural, howbeit recognised and lauded by the law and common consent when first instituted. Such things I would have amended; but it appeareth not just that, for the sake of these matters, the foundations of pious men should be done away. We should consider what they themselves would have done, had they been endowed with greater light, and conform, as nearly as may be, to their bequest."

L. "Well then, how knowest thou that Count Robert of Ferrers, and other founders of monasteries, had they lived in these days, and known that masses could not benefit them, and had been aware of the need of learning in this realm, would not have bequeathed their goods to so useful a business?"

Here Father William, in his turn, was somewhat pushed for an answer.

"Nevertheless," said he, "it is well known, and indeed stated in the grant, that, besides the object of praying and offering masses for the soul of the founder, it was out of love and good will to the order of Cistercian monks that the monastery was founded; and that, besides the superstitions which thou allegest, it has furnished refuge to many who have been weary of the world, and promoted divers beneficial objects. Is it just, then, to frustrate the object of the donors, by devoting to schools what was by them decreed for other purposes?"

Latimer had no great regard to the strict adherence to the will of the founders, though he could not but admit the advantages which his friend attributed to monasteries.

L. "I admit the utility of monasteries as a refuge in troublesome times; but the country is better ordered than heretofore."

A. "Alas! how knowest thou that troubles may not again arise; when many shall long for the quiet seclusion of the monastery; or how knowest thou, even should peaceful days succeed, whether the cares and vanities of life may not so cumber the souls of men, that many may be glad to pass their declining years in the solitude of the cloister, rather than the ceaseless turmoil of an ungodly world?"

L. "Well, I would have some retained in each county, which may be useful for such purposes as

thou mentionest ; and, in truth, have already urged Lord Cromwell on that head."

A. " And dost thou look only to utility ? Is it nothing that the praises of God should ascend each day from so many places in the land ? Is it nothing that men should devote their days and nights to the service of their Maker ? Is it nothing ——"

L. " Why, look you, Father William ; if monasteries were as thou so piously declarest, or were they all ordered as well as thine, it were a hard thing to meddle with them ; neither do I judge that God Himself would permit it. But thou knowest as well as I, that many foul deeds are done in monasteries ; and though not one half or tenth part of the ill stories related of them be true, yet I fear me there be too many of them where God is but scantily served, and where laziness, and such ill habits as laziness begets, are frequent."

The abbot could not deny this charge, but only urged that they should be reformed.

" Ay, that is well to speak of," said Latimer ; " but men have got wild notions in their heads, and I suspect thy reform will come too late. Let me speak fairly with thee : a commission has been already appointed ; and it is resolved, as I am credibly informed, that the lesser monasteries and friaries shall be abolished, which it is affirmed are not so well ordered as the larger."

" If it were the lesser houses only," said Father William, somewhat brightening, " it might not be so

bad," (his mind at the moment dwelling on his rivals, the Friars Eremite of Atherstone. But a sense of the injustice of the thought immediately occurred to him; and he checked it by an effort of conscience, the dictates of which he had long accustomed himself to obey). "Besides," he added, "if the smaller be touched, the larger will not long escape. Once break in upon the principle of the sacredness of property, and no man can tell that his own is safe."

L. "Why, as for that, the principle has already been invaded by the pope himself. Thou knowest that scarce ten years back he gave Wolsey a bull to suppress thirty monasteries for the building of Christ Church and Ipswich College; and more lately, he allowed him to appropriate the revenues of monasteries for the founding of cathedral-churches. What is now contemplated is but the following out the pope's own practice: Cranmer purposes to found twenty-four new bishoprics."

A. "Trust it not. There is little hope that the property of monasteries, if suppressed, will be strictly so applied."

L. "Truly, it is to be feared that Cranmer is over sanguine on this matter; I would not give him much for his new bishoprics or his colleges. The king will not be content without a lion's share to help out his wasted exchequer, which is well nigh emptied. Tournaments and pageants are not maintained for naught. The Commons grudge the payment of taxes; and the king is ever ready to spare

them, if he can fill his exchequer any other way. Besides, there be those about him who have a hawk's eye for prey, and will pounce on what they can. In short, worthy abbot, the times are perilous ; your arguments of right and justice will not be much heeded. It is full time that, as I said, thou shouldst put thy house in order : I have told thee so far as I know of affairs ; and though I am not like to be so fond of monasteries as an abbot, yet my services with the queen and Cromwell shall be used to save some at least, and I hope thine will be one of them."

A. " Little hope, alas, of that. I pray God we may be found prepared for what He may send, watching and praying : " and with a melancholy air he replaced the documents in their repository.

Such are the arguments which were employed on the question of the dissolution of monasteries by two honest and moderate men, whose habits of thought were different ; — the one being what some might call, though unjustly, a bigot, — the other an utilitarian ; the one accustomed to see and admire what was good, — the other prompt to detect and remove what was amiss ; the one willing to reform when too late, — the other careless of destroying, in his anxiety to reform.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Confessional.

"I see," he said, "a lovely sight,

A lady as a lily bright."

"Then do thine office, friar gray,
And see thou shrive her free."

SCOTT.

LEAVING Father William and his friend Latimer to discuss these grave matters of Church and State, it is time that we proceed to relate the adventures of the other persons to whom we have already introduced our readers.

It was at an early hour on the following morning—the dew was still upon the leaves and grass—the sun, pouring forth his slanting ray, bathed the landscape in a flood of light, yet without rendering the air sultry or oppressive—all was bright, and fresh, and balmy,—when a young female with a mantle thrown around her, and her face concealed in a muffler, yet not so as to hide a pair of sparkling eyes, was seen issuing from a small postern-door in a high garden-wall, which evidently enclosed the ground of a person of some distinction. The lady directed her steps to the friary church at

Atherstone, and was at once recognised by the two or three paupers stationed, as usual, at the door, who hailed her with many a benediction and exclamation of " Bless you, fair Mistress Alice!" as she bestowed on them her accustomed alms, not without some kind inquiries in passing.

Entering the church, she dipped her finger in the vase of holy water which stood at the door, signed the cross on her forehead, then bent her knee on the pavement, and crossed her hands over her bosom, as she bowed reverently to the high altar which stood opposite the entrance.

Passing onward, she arrived at the shrine of the blessed Virgin, whose image was placed above the side-altar. It was a small wooden figure of no very exquisite sculpture, tricked out with gaudy robes and tinsel ornaments. Six wax tapers were burning before it; and all around the small chapel in which it was placed were suspended votive offerings, consisting of waxen legs and arms, by those who supposed themselves cured, by the help of the blessed Virgin, of various wounds and maladies—crutches by those who had been relieved from lameness—waxen images of children of the same weight as the children preserved from sickness—and pictures representing various disasters, by those who had been saved from peril by land or by water. Here our fair devotee knelt and prayed; but how many aves, and how many paters she repeated, we cannot say. Proceeding onward, she came to the shrine of the

patron saint, Michael the archangel, and here commenced a new series of devotions.

While she is so engaged, we must describe the other personages who occupied the church. In a recess, partly resembling a sentry-box and partly like an arm-chair, placed in the transept, but so arranged as to command a view of the interior of the church, sat Friar John, with a white staff in his hand, listening to the confession of one or two persons who came to him for absolution. We have already described the appearance of this personage as being not of the most prepossessing character. At present you might see that his mind was little fixed on the duty which he was performing ; and as the various penitents came to the confessional, you might observe his listless demeanour, sometimes varied with a slight sneer of contempt, sometimes broken with a scarcely suppressed yawn, whilst he heard the simple folk relating to him their various failings and misdemeanours. On a sudden, however, an expression of more than usual interest animated his face ; and he evidently disposed himself to give more attention than he had hitherto deemed it necessary to bestow, when the fair Alice came to the place where he was seated. Kneeling with modest air, the maiden proceeded to disburden her heart to the minister of religion. We must not reveal the secrets of the confessional ; suffice it to say that Alice was not dismissed so easily as the rest. The friar heard with attention what she had to say ; and instead of

the customary formal absolution, proceeded to question her with some strictness. Considerable time elapsed before the confession was over, and the fair penitent rose from the ground with a flush on her brow, and a tear in her eye; and instead of departing at once homewards, she proceeded to tell her beads for at least an hour longer before the shrine of the Virgin; and ere she left the church, had dropped several silver pieces into the alms-box of the convent.

Alice Fitzherbert had been rigidly brought up by her parents in the tenets of the Church of Rome. Her good and kind mother had gone to her rest some years previously, surrounded with all the outward rites of a Church to which, nevertheless, it is not too much to say her spirit was superior. Ralph Fitzherbert, the father of Alice, was of more worldly character; and his attachments were divided between a parental love for his fair daughter, and a bigoted adherence to the interests of the Church. Alice, deprived of her mother's care, had been educated in the nunnery of Polesworth by her aunt and god-mother the abbess, who had carefully brought her up in the various accomplishments of the age—writing, drawing, music, needlework—to which were added other branches of knowledge in which ladies of the present day are less skilled, as confectionary and the art of medicine,—the latter of which accomplishments was eminently useful to one who devoted so much time as did Alice to works of charity. It

may be supposed that the worthy abbess did not forget to instruct her docile pupil in the doctrine and discipline of the Romish Church ; nor is it surprising that one so nurtured and educated should cling with hereditary enthusiasm to the religion of her fathers, and entertain somewhat of a noble and virtuous indignation against those by whom her holy mother was assailed, being at that time quite unconscious of her manifold corruptions and superstitions.

Notwithstanding her confession and acts of penance, Alice returned to her father's house, which was in the outskirts of the town, and sought the privacy of her own little chamber, in a more thoughtful and dissatisfied state of mind than she was wont to experience. The fair girl was not insensible to her faults ; she knew that levity and love of admiration were her foibles. Her conscience reproached her with having yielded to these errors on the day preceding, when so much honour had been given her, and so many compliments lavished on her as queen of the forest. She desired forgiveness ; and therefore sought the confessional, and humbly sued for absolution according to the tenets in which she had been brought up. Who could say that she was wrong in unburdening her heart to one of God's ministers ? And had that minister bidden her earnestly seek forgiveness of God, and go and sin no more, who can say that the deed had not been blessed ?

But when the holy father (as she had been led to think him) went on to question her on other matters—when he required her to state her feelings on many circumstances of the foregoing day, and plainly asked her, at last, whether she had not felt more satisfaction in bestowing the prize on the heretic Neville than she would have done on any other of the archers,—when the priest, in his office of confessor, thus required her to disclose feelings which she had not even analysed to herself, her maiden delicacy was offended; and the question naturally arose in her mind, whether any man, even under the garb of religion, had a right thus to intrude into the privacy of her secret thoughts.

Besides, was she sure that the friar would faithfully keep her secrets? Circumstances occurred to her, as she thought on this subject, which led her to suspect that he had, on more than one occasion, betrayed to her father communications which she had divulged under the seal of the confessional. The thought had never struck her before, yet now she believed she had detected the source from which her father had derived information on certain subjects to which he had alluded;—for though Alice was a most dutiful and affectionate daughter, yet she did not find that sympathy in her father which could induce her, on all occasions, to open to him her thoughts and views; and she had been surprised sometimes to find how accurate a knowledge he had of her proceedings. When she put these things to-

gether, it is not to be wondered at, that doubts arose in the mind of Alice as to the necessity of thus laying the thoughts and feelings of her heart before even a minister of the Church.

For a long time did the poor maiden thus ponder and deliberate. It may be doubted whether she had ever before sat so long in her little room, with her head resting on her hand, and the tears chasing each other down her cheek ; for Alice was of a lively and cheerful temperament—she had not yet arrived at that age when thought begins to furrow the brow and sadden the countenance. By degrees, however, her natural disposition regained the ascendancy ; she began to turn her mind to her daily occupation, and bethought her to descend into her favourite flower-garden, and seek her father, whom she had little doubt that she should find pacing to and fro in the shade of the chestnut-walk, as was his ordinary habit previously to his mid-day meal.

Leaving her own apartment, she went down into the hall, and passed out into the garden in search of her father. As she went forth, her eye discerned the form of a person just leaving the garden by a side-door, whom, from his dress and figure, she knew to be Friar John.

Her former suspicions again returned forcibly at this discovery, but did not stop her progress. She entered the chestnut-walk, where she expected to find her father ; and there she found him, but not alone : he had with him the Lord of Badsley. The

two gentlemen were engaged in eager conversation ; and Alice would have retreated, if she could have done so unobserved, but this she was not able to effect.

Clifford first, and then her father, observed her, and came instantly forward to salute her, their serious air giving way to one of cheerful courtesy.

“ Here comes our queen of the forest,” said her father ; “ you must explain to her, Clifford, how it happened that you did not acquit yourself better at the wardmote.”

Clifford for a moment looked vexed ; but it was only for a moment. He at once addressed Alice on the subject ; made very light of his defeat, so far as he himself was concerned ; spoke handsomely of his opponent ; assured Alice that though not her Master Forester, yet he was her devoted servant, and hoped yet to win her favour.

Alice was not displeased with his courtesy ; and the conversation soon became animated,—Clifford becoming ardent and elated when he found that he was not discouraged, and Alice gratified by his attention, and but half aware of the feeling by which, on his part, it was dictated.

After a rather long visit, Clifford was just about to take his departure, when a servant approached them in the garden, dressed in the livery of the Neville family, and bearing in his hand a packet, which, bending one knee, he respectfully placed in the hands of Alice. The letter was endorsed, “ For

the hands of my right loving friend Mistress Alice Fitzherbert." Alice broke the thread which bound it, and read as follows :

GENTLE MISTRESS ALICE,

After my hearty commendation, this cometh to advertise you, that but for the inconvenient heat of the day, it was my purpose to have offered you in person my congratulations on the honours which have befallen one so worthy to receive them. I pray your goodness to accept my apologies ; and hope that this may find yourself and your worshipful father at liberty on this day week to partake of our poor cheer at dinner, at half an hour after noon.

Maurice would have been the bearer of this message, but is summoned to the assize at Warwick, where he is like to be detained the best part of the week.

I am your loving friend,

MARGARET NEVILLE.

Given from Bentley Manor, this 25th day of August.

Alice handed the letter to her father, whose brow became clouded as he perused it ; and it is probable he would have found some excuse to decline the invitation, but he observed that Clifford had received a similar epistle. This altered the case ; and he gave his daughter leave to answer the invitation in the affirmative.

As the writing a letter was an affair of rather more labour than it is at present, Alice, having received the desired permission, withdrew to her boudoir for the important duty ; and after an interval

of about half an hour, her waiting-maid descended to the servants' hall with an epistle neatly folded up, and bound round by a silken thread, which she placed in the hands of Dame Margaret's servant.



CHAPTER IX.

A Dinner-Party in the Sixteenth Century.

At metè was she well ytaughte withalle;
She lette no morsel from hire lippes falle,
Ne wette hire fingres in hire saucè depe;
Wel coude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe,
Thatte no drope ne fell upon hire brest;
In curtesie was sette ful moche hire lest.
Hire overlippè wiped she so clene,
That in hire cuppe was no ferthing sene
Of gresè, whan she dronken hadde hire draught.

CHAUCER.

AT the time of which we are writing, the people of England had for many years been exempt from the scourge of serious civil commotions. The union of the houses of York and Lancaster, by the marriage of Henry VII. with the Princess Elizabeth, had put an end to a source of strife which had long devastated the land. Henry VIII., during the first part of his reign, had maintained internal tranquillity; and though the seeds of future mischief were widely sown, and bitterness of spirit was beginning to prevail, yet the intercourse between neighbours was not yet interrupted by the demon of civil strife.

During these years of comparative peace society had undergone important changes. The greater part of the old nobility had perished in the wars, their

estates had changed hands, and the feudal habits of the middle ages were beginning to be gradually blended with the customs of more modern days. The armed knight was seen only at the pageant or tourney; the immense properties of the old barons were becoming subdivided; and a race of country gentlemen were springing up, who have since, for a long time, formed perhaps the principal and most influential branch of English society. Instead of the baronial castle, a more modest and unassuming residence was beginning to be common in the country: those who formerly dwelt for safety within the precincts of the town, were building manor-houses in the midst of their estates; yet these were still often surrounded by the deep moat, or the garden or court-yard which encompassed them was guarded by tower and bastion.

Maurice and Robert Neville were the sons of an English gentleman who had married a relative of Hugh Latimer's, and had, a few years since, left his wife a widow with her two sons, then about passing from youth to manhood. Maurice, the elder, was of enthusiastic temperament, grave and thoughtful, of deep feeling, and of keen sensibility. Robert, the younger, of at least equal ability and strength of mind with his brother, was of a more bright and cheerful character. Both were ardently attached to their mother; and she, on her part, was sincerely thankful to God when she looked upon her two promising sons.

According to the frequent custom of those days, Robert had been sent for his education to the abbey of Merevale, though without any view to his being a member of the fraternity. Father William had been so much pleased with his good disposition, as well as aptitude for learning, that he had taken him under his especial care, and given him instruction in much valuable knowledge. When he came to the proper age, the worthy abbot had sent him with an exhibition from the abbey to complete his education at Cambridge. Here Robert had seen a good deal of his kinsman, Hugh Latimer ; and had often, with pleasure as well as profit, attended his preaching. Nevertheless, his studies under the abbot, and his early association with the monastic life, exhibited as it was at Merevale under favourable circumstances, kept him back from that violent spirit of animosity against the Church of Rome which was adopted by many of the young students of the day, and has continued down to the present time ; often, it is to be feared, more from impatience of control, or from sceptical opinions, than from any rational conviction of the superiority of the reformed faith. Though sincerely anxious for the reformation of the Church, no one would have grieved more than Robert Neville at its subversion. His brother also had adopted the principles of the reformed faith ; but from different education, and more excitable temperament, he was far from being so wise and temperate as Robert. Dame Margaret Neville, a pious and contented lady,

had been led, by the conversation of her sons, to discern the errors of Rome ; though, with a timidity natural to her age and sex, she shrunk from the violent measures which she feared were hastening upon the country.

Having made our readers acquainted with the members of this worthy family, we must now give them some description of their residence and manner of life. Bentley Manor was a good substantial house, constructed, as most of the houses in Warwickshire at that time were, principally of strong oak beams, and the outline broken by a variety of gables and one or two massive chimneys, which gave it a most picturesque appearance, as well as that comfortable look which belongs to English homes. It was surrounded by a moat, or, more properly speaking, a large sunk fence and low wall ; which, though quite insufficient to repel a band of soldiers, was a tolerable protection against any irregular attack by thieves and depredators. The corners of the enclosure were guarded, or rather ornamented, by small towers, and a handsome gateway occupied the centre. It stood in a beautiful glade, just within the verge of the woodland ; sheltered from the north by an eminence crowned with oaks, and overlooking a pleasant valley towards the south-east.

A little before the hour appointed, the guests began to arrive. Latimer and Robert Neville walked over by themselves from the abbey, which was less than a mile distant ; the abbot, from fear of scandal,

having made a rule to decline partaking of the hospitality of his neighbours. Hugh Fitzherbert came up at a stately pace on his iron grey steed, his daughter sitting behind him on a pillion, that being the usual mode of travelling in an age when there were very few carriages of any sort, and still fewer roads which could be traversed with safety. Marmaduke Clifford, handsomely dressed and well mounted, rode by their side, conversing gaily with Alice, and both seemed in excellent spirits.

As Alice alighted at the gate, Robert Neville advanced with a mock deference, and addressed her :

“ Most noble queen, allow your faithful subjects and woodmen to welcome your grace at this their humble habitation, and to offer their bounden service and homage to their liege lady.”

Maurice caught the idea of his lively brother ; and the two youths bending on one knee performed their due obeisance. Alice gave her hands to each of the young men :

“ We greet you well, fair sirs, and worthy woodmen of our forest,” said she. “ And for you, our master forester, we trust you have well performed our commands, to preserve safely the precious charge which we have committed to your keeping.”

Maurice assured her he had performed that, and would perform every other command which she should lay upon him ; and in so saying, expressed himself with a warmth which shewed that if his brother spoke in jest, he at least was in earnest.

turned out of their nest. The chapel and other buildings were dismantled, and the site and circuit of the house, with a dovecote, barn, orchard, and two messuages, which stood upon the land belonging to the friars, were granted by the king to one Henry Cartwright and his son, to hold by the thirtieth part of a knight's fee. This Henry Cartwright appears to have been one of the jobbers of the time, and to have made the purchase only on speculation; for in the same year he sold it to a person named Hill, from whom it passed to Sir John Repington, knight, who, having bought the manor, built upon the ruins of the friary a fair house of brick. Such was the fate of the Friars Eremite and their establishment.

The people thus debarred from their usual place of worship directed their attention more than heretofore to the adjoining monastery of Merevale, where no such imposture was suspected, and the abbot was well known as an upright, pious, and conscientious man. And very general concern was excited when, after the lapse of some time, it was known that the abbey also was to be suppressed. Great was the grief and alarm of the poor Cisterians, when it was intimated to them that the king would be well pleased if they would turn out of their monastery, and resign their estates into his hands. Some of the more hot-headed amongst them were for resisting to the utmost, and setting the visitors at defiance; even the more sober asked, with indignation, what crimes

they had committed, for which they were to be expelled from their homes. But the worthy abbot, being a man of sound judgment, and of that true Christian spirit which resisteth not evil, used his influence with the convent to induce them to submit peaceably to what was inevitable. He reminded some of them of the abuses which had been proved to exist in other monasteries, and which reflected discredit on all; others he told of the cruel fate of the monks of the Charter-house, and of the summary punishment which had been inflicted on those of Glastonbury, two of whom, with their abbot, a man of great consideration, had been drawn from Wells on a hurdle, and hanged as traitors on the top of the hill of Tor, and their heads set on the abbey-gate. The better amongst them he appealed to on the ground of the duty of submission even to unjust oppression, and the difficulty, if they resisted, of keeping clear from the rebellious spirit which had sprung up in the realm. By these and other arguments he induced them to consent to follow the example of their brethren at other monasteries, and give up peaceable possession of their property, rather than have it taken from them by force. Latimer had already made ineffectual efforts to preserve the abbey; and, though his influence was insufficient to obtain this boon, he had been able to procure for them favourable terms in comparison with those on which other monasteries had been surrendered.

It was with a heavy heart and sorrowful spirit

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After due civilities the Dame Margaret led Alice with her to her apartment, to disrobe herself of her riding-costume ; while the rest of the party, having loitered a while in the garden, ascended the flight of steps, and adjourned, for the sake of coolness, into the hall.

It should be observed, that in those days there was great lack, especially in-doors, of those refinements and luxuries which are now so common. Henry VIII. had set the fashion of a most lavish expenditure in dress ; and his courtiers, following his example, were often tricked out in the most sumptuous and magnificent apparel ; while their homes were not supplied with the comforts, or what we should consider even the necessaries, of life.

While the domestics are employed in serving up the dinner, we will take the opportunity of briefly describing the apartment in which it was spread, with its accompaniments and decoration. Dame Margaret Neville, like many other widow ladies, was a little fastidious with regard to the proprieties of social life ; and, as her entertainments were not frequent, she made a point of having every thing in the best order ; so that we must take her household and establishment as a favourable specimen of the style of the day.

The hall in which the table was spread was tolerably spacious, and rather long in proportion to its width ; one end of it was occupied by a staircase, which led into the upper parts of the house, and was

guarded, not by open balusters, but by solid walls or parapets. The roof was open-work of carved oak, the beams being arched, and resting on sculptured corbels. The end opposite to the staircase was adorned by a piece of handsome tapestry, representing a stag at bay, which had cost the good lady of Bentley many years of diligent labour : other portions of the wall were ornamented with pieces of old armour, and swords and bucklers, bows and arrows, tastefully arranged in various devices ; and in the centre was a magnificent pair of antlers, from one of the branches of which hung the silver bugle which on the day of the wardmote had been presented to Maurice by the queen of the forest. But the greater portion of the wall was covered with hangings of green say or baize, which the taste of the good lady had relieved, according to the custom of the day, with stripes of red — giving the hangings, one would think, something of the appearance of a horse-cloth.

This sombre furniture, though in winter it must have looked gloomy, was not displeasing to the eye on entering from the glare of summer noon-day. The length of the side opposite the door was relieved also by a spacious chimney, occupied, as there was no fire, by shining andirons, or dogs, on which in winter rested the blazing wood, but which were now adorned with a profusion of green boughs and flowers. On the opposite side of the room was a projecting bay-window, in which was a carved table of cypress-wood. In one respect the care of Dame Margaret

There was, however, one serious drawback, which to modern ears will sound extraordinary—*they had no forks*. Perhaps it will be supposed that we mean no silver forks; a deficiency which (till within the last century) might perhaps have been not unfrequently met with in the houses of country gentlemen. But no—they had no forks at all; knives they had, with tolerably broad points, and spoons; but forks were not then invented. How Maurice Neville managed to carve that delicate slice of venison which he is just sending to the fair Alice, or how the young lady is to convey it to her mouth, I can no more explain, than I could tell how a Chinese can eat his dinner of rice with two little sticks about the size of knitting-pins. If my readers draw the conclusion that Alice Fitzherbert must have eaten her dinner in a very ungenteel manner, I can only assure them that she did no worse than the accomplished Anne Boleyn, or the stately Catherine of Arragon herself.

Dame Margaret did not think it necessary to have a second course served up—it was not customary; but, as a sort of substitute (or perhaps rather it may have been the origin of second courses), when the venison was removed, a serving-man brought up from the kitchen a broach, or spit, on which were a brace of partridges hot from the fire.

It may be supposed, that with a young lady so lively as Alice, so determined a story-teller as Lati-mer, a young Cantab in the height of youthful spirits,

and the rest of the party pleasantly disposed, the conversation did not flag. The only drawback (and it is often a serious drawback on such occasions) was, that there was a difference of political feeling amongst the company, so that it was necessary to be cautious in avoiding debatable ground,—a caution, however, which it is not always very easy to remember.

“ They tell me, worthy Mr. Latimer,” said Alice, “ that you have been lately at court, and are well known to her gracious majesty Queen Anne.”

“ I have had the privilege of seeing and conversing with her grace.”

“ Pray, tell us something about her,” said Alice ; “ we country folks love to hear a little court-news, even when it is but second or third hand ; but when it comes from one who has so lately been in the presence of royalty itself, we may well be excused for being somewhat curious.”

“ If you inquire, fair lady, of her grace’s wit and virtues, believe me they are such as England may well be proud of in her queen. And she hath a sound discretion in matters of weight, though her outward demeanour be somewhat marked with levity.”

Alice saw that in this sally there was a little satirical allusion to herself ; though, of course, she could not appropriate the blame, without claiming the compliment also.

There were others of the party who did not quite like the praise of queen Anne Boleyn.

"Methinks," said Clifford, "her virtue would have been more conspicuous, had she declined the addresses of the king, at least till he had been divorced from his former wife."

"Nay, good sir; to my certain knowledge, the question of divorce was agitated before the lady Anne Boleyn had come from France, or had even seen the king; therefore she had as little to do with it as you or I."

Alice perceived that she had introduced a dangerous subject; and with a view to correct her mistake, and get away from it as soon as possible, she exclaimed, with vivacity,—

"But tell me, sir, is she as fair as she is virtuous? they say she has six fingers on one hand!"

"I never saw but five, and those on as delicate a hand as"—*your own*, he was going to say, but checked himself, as not wishing to feed the young lady's vanity.

"And what is the fashion of her dress? how weareth she her head-tire?"

"Nay, fair Mistress Alice, how thinkest thou an old preacher like Hugh Latimer has taste to note a lady's head-gear?"

"True, sir; the mind of so learned a clerk, no doubt, is more set on tithes or Easter-dues."

"Or," said Clifford, "a court-chaplain would

deem his attention best given to abbacies and bishoprics."

These words in themselves might have passed for innocent raillery, but taken with the preceding, and judged by the tone, they contained a good deal of bitterness.

"He who coveteth an abbey in these days," said Latimer, "coveteth but a precarious honour; and a bishopric, fair sir, is like to be no bed of roses."

Fortunately, at the moment, Dame Margaret signified to the waiting-men to remove the dishes. The fragments of the feast were taken away, the cloths conveyed from the table, and the various liquors again placed on it. After which, the servants brought baskets of pears, filberts, plums, together with cheese and butter.

This break in the conversation prevented the continuance of a subject which might have interfered with the conviviality of the day; and things went on quite pleasantly.

During this time Maurice Neville was prevented from paying any close attention to Alice by the distance at which they sat from each other, as well as by the duties which devolved on him as master of the feast. Marmaduke Clifford, on the other hand, who was next to her, lost no opportunity of winning her favour; and it was evident that Alice listened to him with pleasure. He was, in truth, a man of handsome and graceful carriage, well versed in all

the courtesies which are apt to win ladies' esteem, and in wealth and station superior to his neighbours. All these things were in Clifford's favour, and he failed not to make the most of them ; so that we must not wonder if the favourable impression made on Alice's heart on the day of the Wardmote, by the skill of the master forester, and the distinction which fell on him, and forced him to exert his powers to the utmost, was on the present occasion considerably effaced by the attention of the handsome Lord of Badsley, when contrasted with Maurice's grave and subdued demeanour. We must remember that Alice, though amiable, good, and high-minded, was very young, and, if the truth must be confessed, a little giddy and open to flattery,—a fault soon detected by the keen eye of Latimer.

As soon as grace after meat had been said, Maurice Neville arose, and with a courteous, though bashful air, proposed a toast, which, he said, they were all bound, as loyal subjects and honest woodmen, to drink,—*The Queen of the Forest*.

There was no want of alacrity, as may be supposed, in responding to this invitation. Each of the guests pledged the fair Alice in a cup of wine, with such compliment as they deemed fit. Latimer, in accordance with the manners of the age, spoke, as in his clerical capacity, with somewhat of seriousness.

"Suffer me, fair queen," said he, "to pledge you in this cup of wine. May the bright prospects of

your life be never darkened by clouds : may you be wise as witty, virtuous as fair : may a good Providence protect and guide you ; and when you are called, according to the common lot of humanity, to drink the cup of sorrow, may it be for your greater joy. Fair maiden, I drink with hearty sincerity to your health and happiness."

The serious yet cheerful honesty of this address, and the paternal tone in which it was delivered, was deeply felt by the kind-hearted Alice ; a tear started for a moment in her eye, but she soon recovered herself sufficiently to respond to the compliments conferred on her, in the usual way, by pledging the company in return.

The gentle reproof, however, conveyed in Latimer's words sunk deep into her heart. It cost her another long fit of meditation in her little room when she returned home, and often recurred in after-life through many days of chequered fortune ; yes, it remained fixed in her memory, as will be seen, at the last hour of existence.

The sincere and warm-hearted Latimer having thus seasonably raised the tone of thought, and directed it to a profitable channel, did not deem it necessary to continue in so grave a mood, but soon returned to his usual cheerful converse.

We need not record the remaining incidents of the day. Suffice it to say, that to all but one—that was Maurice Neville—it passed off happily. Poor Maurice could not bear to see Alice listening with

complacency to the attention and compliments of his rival ; and he was of that serious and sensitive temper, that he was unable to rally during the whole of the evening, and quite incapable of assuming a gaiety which he did not feel.

Latimer and Robert returned early to the abbey, where the former found a messenger awaiting him with an important errand, which shall be delivered in the next chapter.



CHAPTER X.

Interview with the King and Queen.

I am fearful :—wherefore frowns he thus?
'Tis his aspect of terror : all's not well.

K. Henry. Ah, my good lord, I grieve at what I speak,
And am right sorry to repeat what follows :
I have, and most unwillingly, of late
Heard many grievous—I do say, my lord,
Grievous—complaints of you.

SHAKESPEARE, *K. Henry VIII.*

THE person who awaited Latimer's return to the abbey was no other than a king's messenger, who had just arrived, post-haste from London, with the royal command that Latimer should, without delay, repair to the court. The worthy reformer received the message with surprise, and not without some apprehension. When he had left London the prospects of the Reformation were fair, and the influence of his friend and patron, Queen Anne Boleyn, predominant. But how soon the fickle monarch might change his line of policy, or be guided by some new impulse, was beyond the calculation even of those who knew him best. Latimer, however, prepared, as in duty bound, for departure.

The arrangements were soon made ; and Latimer set off the next morning at break of day, after hearty

farewells exchanged with his friend the abbot, and not without some serious misgivings as to what might befall them all before their next meeting.

Travelling on horseback, and by very bad roads, it was not until the end of the third day after his departure that Latimer arrived in London. His first business was to inquire where the king then resided ; and finding that he was at the palace at Westminster, he repaired thither at an hour before noon on the following day, and signified his arrival, in obedience to the king's command. After waiting some while, he was conducted by a yeoman of the guard through a side-passage, and found himself in the royal gardens, opening upon the bosom of the Thames, which even then bore on its waves considerable signs of wealth and traffic. Passing onward through a number of walks and alleys, he heard at a short distance from him sounds of mirth proceeding from an alcove in which he knew that the king was wont to sit with his fair consort. The hearty laugh of Henry was pre-eminent above the rest. Turning an angle in the walk, Latimer came in front of the alcove, and found himself in the presence of the king, with Anne Boleyn (his queen), Archbishop Cranmer, and Dr. Butts the queen's physician. Henry was then in his forty-fifth year, and still retained much of the manly dignity and prepossessing appearance which in his youth had won for him the hearty good will of his people ; but his figure was beginning to yield to corpulency, and the lines betokening evil tempers

were already making themselves visible in his countenance, though not so much yet as to spoil its noble and courteous expression. Queen Anne Boleyn was in the full blaze of fascinating beauty, and a mirthful archness played about her beautiful lips. Beside them stood Archbishop Cranmer, the principal instrument of God in the reformation of His Church ; one to whom, perhaps more than to any other, we owe all that was justly and moderately done in that great change, though the same temper which led him to act with moderation, was the occasion also of his too much yielding in some respects to expediency, and deferring to the judgment of others less worthy than himself. In appearance, he shewed a plain exterior, a mild and unassuming dignity of manners, betokening a humble and peaceable disposition, and a generous, charitable, and honest heart. The whole party was evidently in high good humour ; but the king, as he saw Latimer approach, put on a very fierce countenance, though not quite so fierce as Latimer had sometimes seen him wear.

“ Ha, Master Latimer,” said the king sternly ; “ ’tis well thou art come. Nay, stand back, man,” he continued, as Latimer was about to kneel and kiss his hand, according to his wont ; “ we have heavy charges against thee, which it will be fit that thou shouldst answer, in order that we may know how to dispose of thee.”

“ So please your majesty,” said Latimer, not without some alarm, as he well knew the king’s ca-

deed of conveyance be annulled, and that the abbot be again placed in his just rights.

The commissioner, well knowing that the mere destruction or revocation of the instrument could have no effect, at once produced it, and delivered it up.

“This,” said he, “is the instrument of resignation, which here, before you all, I place in the hands of the Abbot of Merevale.”

The abbot, thus appealed to, came forward, and addressed the people. “Good people, hear me. Though it is in my behalf that ye have come hither, I grieve that you should have acted in this tumultuous manner. What are those ensigns which ye bear on your banner? Are they not the emblems of the crucified Saviour, whose servants we are? Let us call to mind the sufferings and persecution which He endured for our salvation, and the example which He set us to follow; and remember how the saints and apostles were contented to take patiently the spoiling of their goods. And shall we, the servants, expect better things than our Lord and Master? Moreover, my friends, look well to yourselves, if you have regard for my counsel. Be assured that no good will come of resisting the king’s authority.”

The abbot’s character for wisdom and piety was well known, and his authority and admonition began to have its influence on the multitude. Perceiving the effect of his speech, the good father proceeded :

“ My advice is, that ye draw up a petition, containing a statement of your grievances ; and I would request this worthy gentleman, who I must say hath executed his task with kindness and consideration, to present your petition to the king. I may safely pledge myself that the king will not insist on robbing you of your gold, or imposing taxation in those matters which you dislike. With respect to his consenting to restore the monasteries, I am not so sure ; but that is my affair, rather than yours. As to you, my friends and neighbours, Masters Clifford and Fitzherbert, I would seriously counsel you to weigh well the words of the commissioner, and consider the fate of Aske, and other leaders of the insurrection in the north. More I need not say : only I beseech you to dismiss these people quietly to their homes ; which if ye will do, I may venture to say that this worthy gentleman (the commissioner) will keep a prudent silence, or, at the least, report favourably of this affair.”

The two leaders, who throughout the riot had acted rather by the instigation of the friar than their own impulse, began to think more seriously of the business, and to wish that they were well out of it ; and though the friar still sought to fan the flames, his single voice was not able to prevail against the general feeling.

Accordingly the abbot's advice was taken ; pens, ink, and parchment, were speedily provided in the chapter-house ; and many an honest mark was affixed

to the petition ; after which the people were persuaded to depart to their homes ; though not before some of them had drunk the king's health in the convent ale, and emptied the larder of the good cheer provided for the commissioner.



CHAPTER XIII.

The Word unsealed.

The sacred book,
In dusty sequestration wrapp'd too long,
Assumes the accents of our native tongue ;
And he who guides the plough or wields the crook
With understanding spirit now may look
Upon her records.

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But passions spread like plagues ; and thousands, wild
With bigotry, shall tread the offering
Beneath their feet, detested and defiled.

WORDSWORTH.

It was not of course the intention of Father William to avail himself of the forcible recovery of his deed of resignation, or to attempt to retain possession of the abbey, which had been surrendered to the king. The day, however, being far spent, he remained for the night at Merevale, and prepared to take his departure on the morrow.

Disrobed of his monastic costume, and attended by a single servant, the ex-abbot set out the next morning from the abbey, and rode slowly through the forest, with the feelings of a man whose habits of life have been suddenly broken in upon, and who is forced to commence a new and untried course. Though feeling himself unjustly treated, yet he har-

farewells exchanged with his friends, and he departed not without some serious misgivings, which might befall them all before their next meeting.

Travelling on horseback, and accompanied by a few attendants, it was not until the end of the third day of his journey that Latimer arrived in London. His business was to inquire where the king resided, and finding that he was at the palace of Whitehall, he repaired thither at an hour before noon of the following day, and signified his arrival to the king's command. After waiting some time, he was conducted by a yeoman of the wardrobe to a side-passage, and found himself in a garden, opening upon the bosom of the Thames, which even then bore on its waves considerable commerce and wealth and traffic. Passing onward through a number of walks and alleys, he heard a loud laughter from him sounds of mirth proceeding from a group of people in which he knew that the king was with his fair consort. The hearty laughter of the king was pre-eminent above the rest. Turning round, Latimer came in front of the group, and found himself in the presence of the king, the queen, the Boleyn (his queen), Archbishop of Canterbury, and Sir Butts the queen's physician. He was then in his forty-fifth year, and still retaining a manly dignity and prepossessing appearance, which in his youth had won for him the love and respect of his people; but his figure was now somewhat inclined to corpulency, and the lines betokened

AFTER XIII.

Word unscaled.

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boured no resentment against those who had driven him from his home. His calm and equable mind resigned itself at once to the will of God ; and he went forth with the determination to serve Him faithfully in whatever station it should be His will to place him.

On his way, he made a passing visit at Bentley Manor, in order to say farewell to his worthy neighbours before he left the country. Poor Mistress Margaret was in sad alarm on account of the unsettled state of the country and the rioting of the preceding day—the more so because both her sons were absent from home ; Robert being at Cambridge, where he had gone to take his master's degree in arts ; and Maurice having suddenly left the country and gone to the Continent, without explaining the cause of his departure to his anxious mother. After a kind farewell, the abbot proceeded on his way.

The first place at which he rested was the Two Virgins, in Kenilworth. Leaving his horse in the care of his attendant, he directed his steps by a natural impulse, before entering the inn, to the church which was hard by, with the pious wish of joining in that sacred service which had been so long the daily business of his life.

On entering the church, a scene presented itself which to his eyes was rather unusual. In the side-aisle near the door stood a desk on a slight elevation, and on this a massive Bible was fixed by an iron chain : a good number of people were gathered

around, one of whom was engaged in reading with an audible voice, the rest listening with attention. Master Arnold (for so we must now call the ex-abbot) immediately took his seat amongst the group, not at all displeased with their occupation, though he observed with dissatisfaction a certain irreverence in the tone in which the holy book was read, and the careless postures in which the listeners were disposed. After a while the reader was tired, and resigned his place to a sour-featured man, who began to read in a still more irreverent and disagreeable tone.

He had not proceeded far, before a single bell rang for the daily prayers, and the officiating priest entered the church from the vestry ; but perceiving the reader still continuing his occupation, he said with courtesy, as he passed, " I must now beg of you, good master, to desist for a while from your reading, since the hour is arrived for the service of prayer ; and I rejoice to see so goodly a congregation."

" Why, how now, Master Mumble-matins ?" said the reader, in a contemptuous tone ; " thinkest thou we have come here to listen to thy canting service, when we can draw for ourselves from the cistern of living water ?"

" My friend," said the priest calmly, " let every thing be done in due order. Thou hast done a good work in reading God's word to the people ; and now is the time to offer up prayers, in order to beseech God's blessing upon ourselves and His word."

" I tell thee, Sir Priest," said the other, with a

dogged air, "the king hath given orders that the Bible shall be read in all churches; and I will read it in spite of thee or any of thy brother shavelings. They who choose to listen to thy anti-Christian mummary may do as they please; and I shall do as I please."

So saying, this *humble-minded* Christian continued to read in even a louder voice than before; while Master Arnold, much wondering in his mind, accompanied the priest towards the altar, to join in the service of prayer. The church being but a small one, the greatest inconvenience arose from the sound of the two voices occupied in different ways; and the good ex-abbot was much scandalised by the irreverent exhibition, so different from the solemn unison with which the choir at Merevale had been used to chant the sacred service.

The prayers being over, Arnold departed immediately from the church, and returned to the hostelry, in order to take some refreshment before proceeding on his journey: but here his feelings were destined to undergo another severe shock. On entering the guests'-room, which was tolerably filled, he found two persons engaged in a violent and angry altercation. One, who had the stronger voice and firmer nerve, was laying down his opinion in a dogmatical tone; while the other, with the vexed and petulant air of a disputant who has the worst of the argument from his own unskilfulness, was unsuccessfully seeking opportunity to retort the biting words of his

opponent. On the table before them were cups and flagons; and it was evident, from their flushed cheeks and heated brows, that both had been drinking more than enough. Several of the other guests were gathered round them, listening to their eager dispute, and taking part with one or the other, according to their respective views and sentiments.

"Talk not to me," said the one, "of thy consecrated fonts and holy water. I tell thee, thou mightest just as well christen thy child in a tub of water at home, or in a ditch by the way, as a font at the church. What is a font but a vessel to hold water? And, for the matter of that, what is a church but a building to keep folks from rain while they listen to the preaching of the word? And all your singing of masses, and matins, and evensong, what is it but roaring, howling, whistling, conjuring, mumming, and juggling?"

The poor man to whom all this was addressed, in vain endeavoured to put in a word of rejoinder.

"And what is she whom you papists call the Holy Virgin Mary? why, no better than another woman: and if she was once, she is now dead and gone, and like a bag of saffron or pepper when the spice is out. And the mass itself, what is it but"——

Here the speaker went on to utter words respecting the holy sacrament which we will not venture to transcribe. Deeply indeed was the worthy abbot moved when he heard the holiest mysteries of the Christian faith — mysteries which lie hid in the

bottomless depth of the wisdom and glory of God, and to which our human imbecility cannot attain—handled thus irreverently; names uttered in angry invective at which every knee should bow; and the sacred word of God quoted by men whose spirit was full of strife and bitterness.

“Sirs, sirs,” said he, unable to restrain his feelings, “let me beseech you to cease this altercation. Such holy mysteries were not revealed to be the subjects of angry strife, but to be thought on and spoken of with becoming reverence. Let me entreat you, in the name of Him whose servants we all are, to cease to speak of them thus rudely.”

This was said in a tone which arrested the attention of the disputants; but they were not in a mood to benefit by the pious counsel.

“Ha,” said one of them, “who art thou? Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Some shaveling monk, I warrant, turned out of his nest to get an honest livelihood, instead of battenning in idleness.”

“And if he be a monk,” said the other, availing himself of the momentary pause, “I doubt not he is an honest man—better, any how, than a heretic like thee.”

“Heretic, forsooth!” said the first; “I’ll teach thee to call one of thy betters a heretic:” and with that he took up an empty flagon by the handle, and would have hurled it at his opponent’s head, had not Arnold arrested his arm, and perhaps saved the other from some serious injury.

But though he thus prevented a deed of violence, he was unable to cut short the strife of words ; and, after another unsuccessful appeal, he resolved to leave a scene which so much outraged his feelings. As he left the room, he observed a man sitting by himself at a table, who had taken no part in the dispute, but whose sharp eyes glistened with delight at the altercation, much in the same way as the sportsman will enjoy a cockfight, or a battle between two dogs. This interesting person Arnold recognised as Friar John ; but was not disposed to claim acquaintance with his former neighbour. However, the friar did not suffer him to depart without a word.

"This is rare sport, most worthy Ab— or rather, I should say, good Master Arnold : only let them alone to cut each others' throats, and honest men will get their rights again."

The abbot heeded not the appeal of Friar John ; but, hastily leaving the apartment, was soon mounted on his horse, whose repose and refreshment had not been interfered with as his master's.

"And is this indeed the fruit of opening the word of God to the people ?" said the good abbot to himself, as he rode slowly on his way. "Alas, alas ! is it not to throw pearls before swine, and to desecrate the holiest things of God ? And yet, but for the unsealing of the Scripture, how would men have learnt to purify the corruption of the Church ?"

Thus did the worthy man ponder on the scene which he had witnessed ; and it is a subject on which

we may well reflect with dismay, when we consider how the wickedness of man has abused the choicest gifts of God.

We justly hail the unsealing of the word of God as an inestimable boon. "There is nothing," as our homily expresseth it, "that so much strengtheneth our faith and trust in God, that so much keepeth up innocency and pureness of the heart, and also of outward godly life and conversation, as continual reading and recording of [or meditating on] God's word. . . . The effect and virtue of God's word is to illuminate the ignorant, and to give more light unto them that faithfully and diligently read it; to comfort their hearts, and to encourage them to perform that which of God is commanded. It teacheth patience in all adversity, in prosperity humbleness; what honour is due to God, what mercy and charity to our neighbour. . . . And in reading God's word, he most profiteth not always that is most ready in turning of the book, or in saying of it without the book; but he that is most *turned into it*—that is most inspired with the Holy Ghost, most in heart and life altered and changed into that thing which he readeth; he that is daily less and less proud, less wrathful, less covetous, less desirous of worldly and vain pleasures; he that daily (forsaking his old vicious life) increaseth in virtue more and more." The written word is also the legitimate check which God has provided for the prevention of error in His Church: it is the standard to which every thing must be

brought. And when the Bible was once fairly opened, the maintenance of the Reformation was secured. No one can contemplate, without a smile of satisfaction, the spectacle of the eagerness with which the people would gather round the sacred volume chained to a desk at Paul's Cross and other stations, and listen with deep interest, as one after the other read in an audible voice from the word so long neglected. Many elderly persons are said to have learned to read for the express purpose of studying the sacred volume. All this was as it should be. But when men began to talk over the most sacred mysteries of the faith at taverns and ale-houses, and quarrel over their cups about the holiest doctrines of religion, and slander and malign each other for their differences of opinion,—we see in all this the natural consequence of the publication of these awful truths to carnal and profane men. Nay, even many sincere but unstable persons, flattered by the appeal which was made to their own private judgment concerning the doctrines of the faith, ran into wild extravagances, and the most fantastic heresies sprung up. King Henry was astonished at the result of the publication of the word of God : “ It was much contrary to his highness's expectations.” “ Had they not the Bible to go to ?” he said : “ whence, then, this diversity of opinion ? How was it that they did not all understand it rightly ? [that is, as he himself understood it.] How was it that perverse men should wrest and interpret holy Scripture to divers senses

called the Bloody Act, or the scourge with six thongs. The six articles were briefly these: 1. The doctrine of transubstantiation was established by law. 2. The communion in both kinds excluded. 3. The marriage of priests forbidden. 4. Vows of celibacy made obligatory. 5. Private mass for souls in purgatory upheld. 6. Auricular confession pronounced expedient and necessary. The penalties annexed to the breach of these decrees were, for the first article, to be burnt as an heretic; for the others, to be hanged as a felon; and, in all cases, to forfeit lands and goods to the king as a traitor,—a tolerably strong inducement to a needy and rapacious monarch to see that the law was duly enforced.

This most arbitrary and tyrannical act was so constructed as to cut both ways at once, and involve both Papists and Protestants; so that a witty foreigner said,—those who were against the pope were burnt, and those who were for him were hanged. In fact, so impartial was the law, that Papists and Anabaptists were dragged to the stake on the same hurdle. Dreadful were the sufferings of the unhappy people under these enactments, which remained in force during the rest of Henry's reign. The prisons were insufficient to hold the persons accused; and many left their native shore, and sought safety in exile.

Both Cranmer and Latimer struggled, though in vain, against the passing of this most tyrannical bill; the former disputing against it for three days in the

parliament-house. When these efforts were unavailing, Cranmer, being of a more flexible and submissive character, accommodated himself to circumstances, though he took a less prominent part than heretofore in public affairs : but Latimer resolved at once to withdraw from the office of bishop, which he thought he could no longer hold with safety or with honour. To persevere in his plans of reform would have been ineffectual under existing circumstances, and would only have brought ruin on himself; to continue inactive would not have suited his temperament; and as to agreeing to any thing which in his conscience he believed was contrary to God's book, he would, as he emphatically declared, "sooner be torn in pieces by wild horses."



CHAPTER XIV.

The Enthusiast.

I marked his desultory pace,
His gestures strange, and varying face,
With many a mutter'd sound.

• • • • •
Full oft unknowing and unknown
He wore his endless noons alone
Amid the autumnal wood.

Oft was he wont, in hasty fit,
Abrupt the social board to quit,
And gaze with eager glance upon the tumbling flood.

WATSON.

WHEN Latimer doffed his rochet and other episcopal robes, he made a skip on the floor with joy, and gave vent to his feelings with his usual pleasantness. "I am now rid," said he, "of a great burden, and never found my shoulders so light before."

Freed from the restraints of his office, he resolved on paying a visit to his friends and kinsfolks in Warwickshire. Accordingly, setting out one fine morning with his trusty servant Bernher, he travelled for three days, and found himself again at Bentley Manor. The good Dame Margaret was much in the same state as he had left her—busily engaged at her loom, with her female domestics in the same room as usual; her house the same pattern of well-

ordered simplicity. She was heartily glad to see her old friend Latimer; and he, on his part, was no less pleased to be again under the quiet roof of one whom he loved and respected.

"Well, Robert," said he, when they were alone together, "and how are all our good friends and neighbours? I need not inquire after your own health, for your ruddy cheek and healthful eye shew that God's blessing is upon you; and I am glad to see her years sit lightly upon your excellent mother; but you have scarcely spoken of your brother—how is Maurice?"

"I wish I could speak as well of Maurice, and others of our friends, as of myself and my mother. In bodily health Maurice is well enough, but I grieve to say that he has taken to strange ways. Since you left us he has got hold of the writings of some of the foreign reformers, which have much disheartened him. You know he was always somewhat flighty and unsound, and had wild fancies as to the interpretation of Scripture. He has been over again to the Continent, and has been reading the writings of one John Calvin of Geneva, which have put into his head strange phantasies, that all things are fore-ordained and determined beforehand by Almighty God in such sort, that a man predestinated to destruction cannot work out his salvation if he will, but must needs perish; and he hath come at last to persuade himself that he cannot be saved, and is, like Esau or Judas, one of the reprobates."

"How!" said Latimer, "doth he not believe in his Saviour?"

"Yea, truly I hope so."

"Why then doth he not rely on God's gracious promise, that 'all who believe in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life?' Christ died for all; He shed as much blood for Judas as He did for Peter; Peter believed, and therefore was saved; Judas believed not, and therefore he perished—the fault lay in him alone. Why should we go about to trouble ourselves with curious questions of the predestination of God? Let us rather make sure that we are in Christ, and then all is well with us, and we may be sure that we are ordained unto eternal life."

"Howbeit, Maurice thinketh that his faith is not living, and that he doth not cling to Christ sufficiently."

"Hath he not the mark of faith? It is written, 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' Maurice used to be a man of good works, upright, pious, charitable: hath he degenerated aught in his living?"

"He is still the same honest, upright man, but methinks he is not quite of so charitable a disposition as he was formerly, but deemeth that all who differ from him never so little must inevitably be damned."

Latimer mused, as in deep thought. "Knowest thou aught," said he, "which hath happened to sour his temper? When took he to these ways of

thinking? You said, I think, that he crossed the sea?"

"About a year and a half ago he departed suddenly from home; and when he returned, after a sojourn first at Strasburg, and then at Geneva, for some months, where he consorted with divers of the German and Swiss reformers, he was much changed in manner and appearance—unsocial and stern. He would walk alone in the forest sometimes with his Bible, but oftener with one of the books which he brought with him from Germany; and you might see him, as he walked, strike his hands against his breast, and look upward to the heaven; nor would he return at the usual meal-time, but stayed out till night-fall, and would come back like one bewildered."

"Rememberest thou not aught which happened about the time of his leaving England?"

"To say sooth, my good lord, I have often thought that the marriage of Alice Fitzherbert, which, if I remember right, was announced just about that time, was perhaps one cause of his change. You remember Alice Fitzherbert, who was called the Queen of the Forest, when last you were here?"

"That do I right well; and a fair creature she was, and a good one too, bating a little flightiness, and somewhat of bigotry which she inherited from her father. I marked well the attention which Maurice paid her. And she is wedded, is she? Who is the happy man that won her?"

"She is wedded to Marmaduke Clifford, whom you remember here."

"Ay, ay, him they call the Lord of Badsley; but I liked not his scowling brow and bitter temper. There is no accounting for the taste of women."

"We all thought that Alice would have bestowed her hand on Maurice. She gave him reason to think so; and others as well as Maurice deemed that she behaved capriciously. Sooth to say, she was young and vain: other causes, too, contributed to make her take the step she did. Maurice, you know, was always grave and bashful; Clifford, on the other hand, was bold and forward. His station and wealth were superior to those of Maurice. Not that Alice would have been won by mere wealth; but station and consequence have ever much weight in woman's eyes: and Clifford made the most of his advantages, —dressed bravely, and rode gallantly with hawk and hound. Nevertheless, I doubt whether he would have won the hand of Alice but for the urgent desire of her father, and the machinations of that wily fox, Friar John, who exercised a great influence over both father and daughter, and used all his power to induce her to refuse Maurice, whom he called a heretic, and to wed one who was devoted to the interests of the Church. I was absent from home when it was all arranged. It was about the time when Father William resigned the monastery, and the friar tried to provoke the people to riot and rebellion. When I returned home, I found that Maurice had left the

country, and that Alice was just on the eve of giving her hand to Marmaduke Clifford. Alas ! I fear she bitterly rues her choice. It is said her husband is harsh and cruel : and she herself is an altered woman since her marriage. You would not recognise the bright sunny face of Alice Fitzherbert in the deep, thoughtful, downcast looks of Alice Clifford."

"I hope I may see her during my visit in these parts. Think you she will remember me?"

"Yes, surely ; she has often spoken of you with kind remembrance."

Latimer and his companion were sitting together at the bow-window of the hall, which, being raised above the ground, overlooked the garden-wall, and commanded a view of the forest. The sun had now sunk beneath the horizon, and the shades were gathering on the trees and glades, when, at a short distance, they saw Maurice Neville slowly approaching from the forest. His appearance was such as his brother had described. He walked slowly, with folded arms, looking down on the ground as he walked, lost apparently in abstraction. His brother went to meet him at the gate, and spoke to him with kindness ; but he took little heed, though he answered calmly. When, however, he entered the hall, and perceived Latimer, his manner suddenly became changed, and he greeted his old kinsman with a cordial welcome.

The arrival of Latimer seemed in a great measure to dispel the cloud from his brow. The evening

meal, which was presently brought in, was partaken of by all the family with cheerfulness; and though it was apparent that Maurice was making an effort to sustain his spirits, yet nothing of harshness was in his countenance or speech. When, however, the time arrived for evening devotion, Maurice's dejection seemed to return. He groaned bitterly more than once during the offering up of the prayers; and as soon as they were over, he hastened to retire to his apartment, apparently unable to control his feelings.

"It pains me much," said Latimer to Dame Margaret, "to see your son thus oppressed in spirit. We must try and encourage him, and bring him back to his former self."

Dame Margaret shook her head with a desponding air. "I would I knew," said she, "how to amend him; but I fear his malady is beyond human skill to cure. It must be left to time, and to the mercy of God."

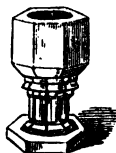
Maurice Neville was an unfortunate instance of that species of morbid fanaticism which sprang up with the Reformation, and has never since been quite extinct. The first who exhibited these opinions in England were called Gospellers, *i. e.* Evangelicals. They were much the same in their opinions and habits as the more violent amongst the modern evangelical dissenters. Even Bishop Hooper greatly blames them. Some of them, like Maurice himself, were pious and zealous men; but others were a scandal

to the gospel which they professed. The sermons and other writings of the times abound with sharp expostulations and severe denunciations respecting them. The principal peculiarity of their opinions consisted in the strange inferences which they drew from the doctrine of God's foreknowledge, reckoning that since every thing was decreed, and the decrees of God could not be frustrated, therefore men were to leave themselves to be carried on by their fate. In consequence of which notion, some fell into great impiety of life, believing that, if they were predestined to salvation, it mattered not how they lived. Others, fancying themselves reprobates, fell into abject desperation, supposing that nothing could save them.

The German reformers soon discerned the ill effects of this doctrine. Luther changed his mind about it, and Melancthon wrote openly against it; but Calvin still maintained the doctrine of absolute decrees:—only he warned the people not to think much of them, since they were mysteries into which men could not penetrate. Many of his disciples, however, did not follow this discreet advice, but pushed the doctrine to its extreme consequences, and fell into the evils of which we have spoken.

Much controversy has in subsequent times arisen on these difficult points. Perhaps the safest course is to admit at once the doctrine of foreknowledge and predestination on God's part; but to believe also that which is no less plainly set forth in holy Scrip-

ture—the free agency of man. To reconcile the two is far beyond the scope of human intellect. It is one of these numerous points with regard to which, on this side the grave at least, we must be content to remain in ignorance.





into a sheep-walk, so there will be no need of these buildings—they will be suffered to fall into ruin. And the land, which used to support the whole monastery, besides labourers, will now serve only to eke out the revenue of an extravagant and needy nobleman."

Proceeding onward, the three companions descended the woody bank; and crossing the small meadow, and the causeway between the pools, arrived at the battered ruins of Merevale Abbey.

Very different was the scene from that which now meets our eye. When we look in the present day upon the beautiful ivy-mantled ruins of Tintern or Fountains, or the still interesting though scanty remains of Merevale, it is with something of a pleasing recollection of other days, which had their distinct associations, differing, in many respects, almost entirely from our own. Romantic thoughts arise of days and things gone by—days which we can scarcely realise in our minds; so different were they from those in which we live. The comforts and luxuries with which we are surrounded—the downy couch, the rich furniture, the works of art—are strange contrasts to the hard living, the exact discipline, the fasts and vigils of these men of religion, mistaken though in many points we believe their religion to have been. The bustling scenes of business, where every man is in the fever of active occupation, has little in common with the times and scenes in which the abbot and his convent performed their daily round of calm devotion;

CHAPTER XV.

The ruined Abbey. Image-worship.

Methought I saw, 'tween walls of deep decay,
Where through a mouldering portal look'd the moon,
A solitary vestal kneel and pray
Within that aged temple, all alone,
With adoration still and pensive grown.

The Cathedral.

ON the following morning, Latimer signified to his two young friends his intention of walking to see the ruined monastery of Merevale.

"We have effectually dispersed the rooks," observed Maurice, "by destroying their nests."

"'Tis a sad melancholy sight," said Robert, "and grieves one's heart to look on."

In their way to the monastery they passed a range of low farm-buildings, which had formerly been the Grange of the monks. These already began to shew symptoms of dilapidation: the gates were broken, or thrown off their hinges; the wild grass grew in the midst of the farm-yard; not a stack was to be seen in the rick-yard, nor a beast in the stall.

"The property has been sold," observed Robert; "and the new proprietor has turned the whole farm

think of the scores of poor who had so often thankfully received their dole, now left in indigence, or driven to lawless courses. Entering the hall, he thought on the merry faces of the school-children who daily assembled there to receive instruction from the monks, and were now deprived of the means of learning. The abbot's private apartments, which they next entered, were stripped of their wainscoting of carved wood; and the secret recess where the good abbot had so carefully kept the records of the monastery was left open and empty. In viewing the scene of ruin, Latimer could not but feel some pang of remorse when he thought that his own conduct and influence had in part caused this destruction; though, at the same time, his conscience told him that he had endeavoured to avert the ruthless desolation. It was reform, not ruin, which he had desired. He now felt by experience, that the same power which is able to reform long-existing abuses will rarely stop until it has destroyed as well as reformed. The heart of man has not in it wisdom or virtue for the task.

They passed onward from the abbot's apartments through a door which opened into the vestuary, and thence into the chapel. This also presented the same scene of spoliation as the former, if not more deplorable: the beautiful stained glass of the windows had been battered in or pillaged; the tracery in many parts destroyed; the carving and moulding

stripped away or broken ; the altar overturned : the very gravestones torn up for the sake of the brass with which they were inlaid.

But the intruders had not leisure to contemplate this work of devastation ; their attention being at once arrested by another object. In the south aisle of the chapel, where once had been the altar of the Virgin, the mutilated image had been again reared up ; its disjointed fragments rudely put together, and its head decked with a chaplet or coronet of fresh flowers. Before the image, on the bare ground, knelt a female figure in attitude of devotion ; her face was turned away and bent downward on her breast, so that it was not visible ; but her figure and dress were at once recognised by one at least of the party.

" 'Tis Alice Clifford," said Maurice ; " alas, to see her so employed ! But let us leave her in peace."

Latimer motioned with his hand, and the two brothers left the chapel, while he himself remained behind waiting in silence. Alice had heard the entrance of the strangers, but would not leave her devotions ; soon, however, she rose slowly from her knees, and looking round, at once recognised Latimer. Though she had not met him many times before, yet she had seen enough of him to imbibe that friendship and esteem which one good and sincere heart will feel for another, even though there may be important differences of opinion between them.

She advanced, therefore, to meet him, and offered her hand in token of remembrance.

"I crave pardon, madam," said Latimer, "for thus breaking in upon your devotions."

"Nay, sir, I had even now finished them; and am pleased again to meet you, though the scene in which we meet be melancholy."

"It is indeed sad to see the work of the ruthless destroyer amidst scenes once consecrated to God."

"But, sir," said Alice, with a change in her demeanour, "am I not even now speaking to one who has been a chief promoter of these outrages—one whose preaching has brought desolation on this place—one who has been the means of driving out his own friend into exile?"

"Nay, dear Mistress Alice, lay not to my charge the desolation you see around you. Rather believe that I have used the utmost influence which I possessed to avert it; and let me inform you also that our worthy friend, who once so well governed the society which dwelt here, is now employed in the pastoral labour of a parish, having obtained, by my appointment, a secular charge in the diocese of Worcester."

"'Tis well, my lord, that you have remembered your friend in his adversity. Still I fear me that thou art one of those on whose head will rest the evils under which the land now groans. Hast not thou raised thy voice against the holy observances which for many an age have been cherished in our monasteries?"

"Nay, lady, I have not raised my voice against

their holy observances, but against their frauds and superstition. Knowest thou not, even in this neighbourhood, impostures brought to light, which may well have demanded justice and exposure?"

"Alas, I do indeed, sir. But why, in rooting out imposture, hast thou also destroyed the peaceful home of pious men such as dwelt within these walls? the whole country crieth shame on the ruthless desecration of this abbey."

"I have already said, dear lady, that I regret as much as thou canst that the spoiler should have been here. I have always held that such customs as were contrary to God's word might have been reformed, and abbeys such as this retained for holy purposes suited to the age in which we live. But the abuses were too tenacious to be easily rooted up; and the same strength which was required to remove abuses has destroyed the structures and societies themselves."

"And what are they," said Alice, with some indignation, "that thou ventur'est to call abuses, seeing that they are sanctioned by our holy Church?"

"Holy Church has no right to sanction that which is contrary to God's written word. Saw I not thee even now kneeling before that graven image of the blessed Virgin? Hast thou never read the word of God? 'Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image: thou shalt not worship *nor bow down* to it. Saw I not thee with clasped hands and head bowed down before yon lifeless block? Can any sanction

of the Church authorise such departure from God's eternal word?"

Alice remained in silence. The words of Latimer were unanswerable, save by sophistry and subtle refinement, of which her sincere heart was incapable. Latimer perceived the impression which he had made, and proceeded with a tone of affectionate remonstrance.

"Again, it is written," said he, "in this book,"—and he took the Bible from the case which hung at his girdle,—"it is written here by the finger of God, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him *only* shalt thou serve.' And yet they of Rome suffer, yea encourage, their members to worship a host of saints who, though holy and memorable, are but men like ourselves. We rightly revere their memory; but it is a sin against God's majesty to worship them. Blessed above women though we acknowledge the mother of our Lord, it is a violation of the divine precept to bow down to her, and pray to her as God."

"But," said Alice, "may we not beseech her to intercede as mediator with God in our behalf, and to pray for us?"

"The word of God is peremptory: '*Thou shalt not worship nor bow down.*' Besides, 'There is *one* Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.' Why not go at once to the blessed Saviour, who hath a knowledge of our infirmities, having Himself endured the like, and hath promised to aid

our prayers, seeing that He ever liveth to make intercession for us ?

“ Suffer me, dear lady—for I perceive that thou hast a heart to learn the truth—suffer me to place in thy hand this holy volume.—Nay, shrink not from its touch. It hath the savour of life to those who read it aright. Receive it from a Christian bishop and pastor. I bid thee not read with a cavilling and contentious spirit, such as too many bring to its sacred pages ; but read with prayer and humility, and an earnest desire after truth. If thou findest in it aught which is clean contrary to the customs in which thou hast been nurtured, be assured that those customs cannot be good.

“ They tell me, lady, that thou hast become sad of late ; that thou art not gay and light-hearted as thou wast when last I met thee : learn to look upon sorrow as sent by Almighty God to chasten and amend thy heart. Be assured that it is good for us to be afflicted, that we may know God ; and join thyself closer to Him. In that book thou wilt find consolation such as can flow from no other source. If happy days should shine upon thee, thou wilt know how to bear them with moderation ; if evil days should come, thou wilt learn patience and submission.”

The tears bedewed the cheeks of Alice as she listened to the affectionate address of the Christian bishop ; and she received with trembling hand the precious gift which he bestowed upon her.

“ May God be merciful to thee, dear lady,” said

Latimer, "and bless thee, and lead thee in the way of truth, and give thee peace both now and evermore." And with this solemn benediction he departed.

In contemplating the events of the Reformation, and endeavouring to enter into the thoughts which must have filled the minds of earnest persons at that eventful time, it is impossible not to be struck with the peculiar difficulty of their position. Brought up in the bosom of a Church which they had been taught to revere, blinded by habit to its corruptions—it may be, quite unacquainted with the worst of them,—they were suddenly called on to renounce their allegiance to that mother in whom, perhaps, they had been accustomed too much to trust. It was not a mere matter of reasoning, but rather of feeling; and the best and most pious feelings of the heart, being misdirected, would often be a bar to the removal of that delusion of the understanding by which they were blinded against the superstition and corruption of their creed. To many, also, of high principle, it would seem a point of honour to cling the more devotedly to a persecuted Church, especially when assailed by manifest cruelty and injustice. All these circumstances will account for the tardiness with which the eyes even of pious and intelligent persons have been opened to the corruption of the Church of Rome, and the tenacity with which many still cling to her communion. And the more bitterly Rome is calumniated, let us be assured, so much the

more decidedly will her best sons shrink from communion with her calumniators. It is only the calm and sober demonstration of her palpable abuses, and the contrasting them with the letter of Scripture and with the practice of the first Christians, by which we may hope to succeed in bringing Romanists to renounce their errors, and adopt the sounder and more ancient creed. Only by God's blessing upon means like these, addressed to that good sense which is the accompaniment and providential reward of purity of heart and a good conscience, may we hope that the mist will be cleared from the understanding of the sincere Romanist, and his eyes opened to discern the truth.

The conversation of Latimer, and the precious gift which he had bestowed, were blessed to the good of Alice Clifford. She had been much struck by the manifest incongruity of her image-worship with the plain letter of God's word. She wondered that she should ever have been deceived by the sophistry, which could argue, that bowing down and kneeling before an image were not acts of worship. She trembled at the sin of which she had unconsciously been guilty, and earnestly besought God to give her light and understanding. She even ventured to converse with her husband on the subject; but he had become harsh and neglectful, being a selfish and capricious man, utterly unworthy of her, and unable to sympathise in her feelings. He harshly bade her go seek her heretic friends, and trouble him not with

her fancies. With this permission she sought the society of Dame Margaret, from whom, for a while, she had been estranged; and here she had several opportunities of again conversing with the worthy Latimer, who was the instrument of leading her to many truths, and unfolding to her the sense of many parts of Scripture. The change in her sentiments was gradual, but complete. It was not a conversion from one faith to another—it was but renouncing the corrupt practices in which she had been trained; and her pious devotion at once placed her in the arms of that pure Church which, if men but knew it, has been their portion since the days of the Apostles.

Latimer's visit was cut short by an unforeseen accident. One day as he was abroad with his friends, and happened to be watching the falling of a tree,—going imprudently too near the spot, the tree fell on him, and he narrowly escaped with his life. For some time he was in considerable danger; and even when that had passed, the injuries which he had received rendered it necessary for him to place himself under the care of a skilful surgeon. Accordingly, he bade adieu to his kind friends, and was conveyed in a litter by tedious stages to London. For some time he remained, as he describes himself, a “sore-bruised man.” Nor was this the only misfortune that befell him. The persecution under Gardiner of all that dissented from the six articles was raging in full fury; and emissaries were employed to get together any charges which might implicate Latimer, ob-

noxious as he was to the Romish party, which now guided the counsels of the king. There was no great difficulty in getting up a charge against one so free of speech as Latimer. He was apprehended on some accusation respecting expressions which he had used in conversation, and being brought before the council, was committed to the Tower. No record remains of his examination ; but there is reason to suppose that it was held in the royal presence. Henry, though grown more capricious and tyrannical than ever in his advancing age, retained something of generous attachment both to Cranmer and Latimer ; and it was probably owing to his interference that Latimer was saved at that time from the stake or the scaffold.

Six years he lay a prisoner in the Tower, looking daily for death, and resolved to endure it in its most terrifying torments, rather than abandon, as he said, one jot or one tittle of the truth of God's word.

His life, however, was spared through this tempestuous reign ; until the death of Henry, and the accession of Edward, restored him to liberty.



CHAPTER XVI.

The Reunion. Conversation on Church Matters.

Not choice,
But habit, rules the unreflecting herd,
And airy bonds are hardest to disown.
Hence, with the spiritual sovereignty transferred
Unto itself, the Crown assumes a voice
Of reckless mastery hitherto unknown.

WORDSWORTH.

WE must now pass over a considerable interval of time, with such notice only as is necessary to introduce us to the concluding events of our narrative.

The Reformation, which had lagged, or rather retrograded, during the last years of Henry's reign, again advanced upon the accession of Edward. The early maintainers of Romish abuses were either dead or old; and a generation had begun to grow up, to whom the idea of reformation was familiar from their youth. As, however, it is not our purpose to record the events of history, but simply to illustrate the times of the Reformation, by shewing in what manner they affected those who lived in them, we will not follow step by step the establishment of the reformed faith: suffice it to say, that the First Book of Homilies, the Liturgy in English, the Ordination-service, Catechism, Offices and Articles, which, taken

together, may be said to represent the doctrine and constitution of the English Church, were adopted by the nation during the reign of Edward, at the suggestion of Archbishop Cranmer, in much the same form as we now possess them.

Old Latimer had refused to be reinstated in his bishopric on account of his advanced age; and had accepted the invitation of Cranmer to live with him at Lambeth, and employ himself in two things peculiarly suited to his temper: one was, to disburse the archbishop's charities to the poor; the other, to preach every Sunday to the king. The last office he performed from a pulpit erected in the garden at Westminster, the hearers gathering round him on the grass, and the young Edward listening to him from the window. Latimer seems to have been a privileged person, and to have said with impunity what he pleased on all subjects. He would take a text from Scripture, and begin to discuss it; but in a few minutes he would ramble away to all sorts of strange stories, and soon get into the midst of politics. His first object was to induce the young king to be a good youth, and mind his books, and take care how he married; then he would launch out into a torrent of round abuse against the covetousness and sinfulness of the age, and the laxity of discipline in the Church; for he was grown querulous in his old age, and ill satisfied with the Reformation,—not, it must be confessed, without reason, as will be seen hereafter.

We will now resume our story in the summer of 1553. Hugh Latimer has just been at Grimsthorpe in Lincolnshire, at the house of his friend and admirer, the "humorous, lively, and kind-hearted" Duchess of Suffolk; and takes the opportunity, on his return, of paying a visit to his friends in Warwickshire.

In the course of years which had elapsed since we first introduced our readers to the worthy family at Bentley Manor and their neighbours, many changes had taken place in the circumstances, and even in the character, of some of them. Dame Margaret, though still alive, was a feeble and aged woman, wearing out her few remaining days in holy contentment, if not in peace. Hugh Fitzherbert had died some years since. Maurice and Robert Neville, Alice and Marmaduke Clifford, whom we first knew in the spring-tide of youthful gaiety, though still in the full vigour of life, had arrived at days of sober thought; the heyday of youth had passed; feelings once deeply seated, if not erased, had ceased to agitate their breasts. The once gay and lively Alice had passed through the seasoning of affliction, and acquired a peace of mind which a sure trust in Christ alone can give. It was perhaps a blessed thing for her that her violent and capricious husband treated her with neglect, and devoted himself to the sports of the field; for his indifference caused him to care little for her proceedings and opinions, and left her, in general, to pursue her own unmolested course.

which was a humble and sincere devotion to the cause of true religion, and a quiet unostentatious life of charity and godliness.

Maurice Neville had never regained the cheerfulness of his temper, which, as we have seen, had been soured by disappointment, and preyed on by fanaticism. His body was emaciated by mental affliction; he had no relish for food, nor enjoyment of sleep. He complained often that he was sore buffeted by Satan; his temperament was one while low and melancholy, so that he would pine in solitude and neglect his worldly business, leaving the whole management of his affairs to his brother; and then again he would become an ardent propagator of the doctrine of Calvin, which he considered to be the doctrine of the Bible, though, like many others, he went far beyond his master, and adopted courses which caused pain and grief to his aged parent and more sober-minded brother. In particular, he had joined himself to a schismatical congregation of Gospelers at Coventry, and had become a sort of leader and teacher amongst them. In these things he found a friend and abettor of congenial temper in Austin Bernher. But Latimer shook his head and disapproved. He saw in these irregular proceedings and extreme views the seeds of future mischief to the Church, as well as present reproach to the cause of the reformed faith, which he had most at heart.

Robert Neville was the same quiet, unassuming, kind-hearted, well-conducted man as ever, and set

forth in his life a true picture of a worthy member of society and sincere Christian, peacefully and conscientiously performing the duties of his station. He had lately been united in marriage to a very excellent lady; and the principal object of Latimer's visit was to perform the office of sponsor to his son and heir. The family circle had received another agreeable addition in the presence of William Arnold, the ex-abbot of Merevale; who had come over from Worcestershire for a short time to meet his old friend Latimer, and arrange a few matters relating to his own affairs. The good abbot had settled down into an exemplary parish-priest, and guided his flock with the same zeal and sincerity with which he had before ruled his convent; rejoicing in the removal of abuses, but exercising a sound judgment in not departing from the pure Catholic doctrine and discipline of the ancient Church.

Such was the party which was assembled in the hall at Bentley Manor on the day previous to the christening of the "little knave," as Latimer called his godson Hugh.

Amongst persons representing such various shades of opinion, but joined together by the bonds of long friendship and domestic charity, it may readily be supposed that many interesting discussions took place on the condition of the Church and nation. Maurice was the only one disposed to differ very seriously from the rest; but his position as host, and the old rooted feeling of respect which he bore his elder

guests, prevented him from indulging in any very strong expressions, though he could not forbear occasionally dissenting from their doctrines. It was remarkable that they who, a few years back, had been most eager in the cause of reformation, and most sanguine as to its beneficial tendency, were now disposed to be least satisfied with its results ; while the abbot, who had suffered most, viewed the course of events with most contentment, though he also had his misgivings and apprehensions.

" Well, good Arnold," said Latimer, " it is some while since we talked over the state of affairs—how likest thou what has come to pass ?"

" You ask me a difficult question, Latimer : the best-intended counsels are oftentimes brought to naught by the perverse passions of men ; and, on the other hand, a merciful Providence will as often direct man's perverseness to His own good purposes."

Latimer. " Howsoever, thou shouldst be well content that the Church is set free from the tyranny of the pope."

" Set free !" exclaimed Maurice, " I see not much proof of freedom, when the supremacy is taken from the pope only to be given to the king. The Church enjoyed but little freedom in the time of Henry VIII. Call you the law of the six articles freedom ? I should have thought that you at least, worthy sir, had little cause to boast of liberty."

L. " But that is repealed ; and a man's head may again feel safe on his shoulders."

Maurice. "Call you the persecution of the Anabaptists and Gospellers by Cranmer and Somerset freedom? 'Tis a strange freedom, methinks, when men may not worship God according to their conscience, but must conform to rites and ceremonies, and wear the rags of popery."

Arnold. "Truly the freedom acquired for the Church by abolishing the power of the pope is a good deal marred by the authority exercised over her by the state; which, to say sooth, is more like a hard step-dame than a nursing-mother or guardian, and exacts a high price for the protection, such as it is, which she affords. Possibly, however, our present thralldom may be permitted by Almighty God for merciful purposes. We are, it may be, too headstrong and contentious to enjoy liberty without danger. When we are more united and peaceful, God may see fit to give us a more unfettered power."

"At all events," said Latimer, "the pope at least is not like to build up his power again. He may regain it for a brief space; and had the monasteries remained, he might again have established his authority — but that chance is not left him."

"Thou knowest," said Arnold, "that I have always held that the monastic bodies might have easily been converted with their own consent into valuable adjuncts of the Church. What good has it done any one that their property should be divided amongst a set of spendthrift nobles?"

"No bad thing," said Maurice, "that it should

have got into the hands of those who will at least keep out the old occupiers, which were not all as good men as thou art."

Maurice, consistently with his principles, was of that stern, uncompromising character, which exults in the accomplishment of its object, even when it cannot justify the means ; and his predestinarian turn of mind led him not only to discern evidence of God's providence overruling for good the passions and crimes of men, but even to think lightly of the crimes whereby what he considered the interests of religion were promoted. This is a great snare, and much to be guarded against by ardent minds.

L. "It is not to be defended, that we may do evil that good may come of it ; howsoever, though we may regret the fate of some of the monasteries, and the purposes to which their goods have been applied, we shall all rejoice in the destruction of image-worship, the worshipping of relics, pilgrimages to shrines, and superstitious mummary, which abounded in them."

A. "None can rejoice more than I for the real reform which God, in His goodness, has enabled us to effect ; yet I fear me that, with the superstitions, we have pulled up many pious customs and reverential feelings, which are not like to take root again. The sacred psalmody and daily worship will disappear gradually from the land, or be kept up only in the cathedrals."

M. "Howbeit we have got what is better than

all the daily services in the world ; that is, the free use of the holy Scripture."

A. " It is indeed a blessing ; and would be ten times more so, if they who read would do it with humility, and with a hearty desire to act up to their knowledge. But such I fear is not always the case."

This touched on a subject on which Latimer was wont to be more than usually eloquent ; and when once fairly started, he did not readily restrain his garrulity.

" Marry," said he, " I wish we could see worthier fruits of the good doctrine which is taught ; but, to my mind, the world gets worse as it gets older : Mammon rules every thing : the authority of the Church is set at naught and contemned, and the Church itself split into sects, which is clean contrary to God's word. Men, too, are grown contemptuous of holy things, and neglect the duty of fasting, to the great detriment of the fisheries, which ought not to be. How are honest fishermen to live, I would fain know, if men will not fast ? Then, what spoiling of churches, under pretence of removing the trappings of antichrist ! You shall see men's parlours hung with altar-cloths, and their tables and beds covered with copes, instead of carpets and coverlids ; and many make carousing-cups of the sacred chalices, as Belshazzar of old celebrated his drunken feasts in the sanctified vessels of the Temple. It is a sorry house, and not worth naming, which has not somewhat of this furniture in it, though it were only a

fair large cushion to fill a window-seat. It may well be said to such reformers as these, 'Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?' But these men do but follow the example of their betters. When a bishopric or deanery falls, the Lord Protector, or one of his minions, is sure to have a pluck at it. The least that a bishop can expect, if he do not lose half his manors, is to have all his timber cut down for him. But there is worse than this; for the very patrons of livings make merchandise of them, or use them to vile purposes, putting in their bailiffs or huntsmen, or keepers of hawks, or other unlearned person, insomuch that the common people jeer at them, saying that they cannot even read the *humbles* [homilies]. Others sell benefices to the highest bidder,—a practice 'most execrable before God.' I will tell thee a story of a man I wot of. There was a patron who had a good benefice fallen into his hands, and a person came to him, and brought him thirty apples in a dish.—'Sir,' said he, 'my master hath sent a dish of fruit, and desireth you to be good unto him about this business.' 'Tush, tush!' quoth he; 'this is no apple-matter; besides, I have as good as them in my own garden.' 'Nay, sir,' said the man, 'cut one of them and try, and you will find them better than they look.' He cut one, and found ten pieces of gold in it. 'Marry,' quoth he, 'this is a good apple.' 'Well, sir,' said the man, 'they all grew on one tree, and have all one taste.' 'Tell your master,

then,' said the other, ' he is a good fellow, and shall have the living.' "

The old man, having had his joke, felt much less indignation against the iniquities of the times than he did before, and relapsed from his temporary anger into his usual good humour. But Arnold was a man of more serious frame.

" I much fear," said he, " such tales are over true ; and they are too grave to laugh at. Covetousness is the bane of the times ; and I am greatly apprehensive lest God hath some sharp punishment in store. Nevertheless, it is our duty to bless and thank Him for the benefits which we have received. Amidst the sinfulness and covetousness of the age, when all seek their own, and so few the things of God, His providence has wrought for us a great work in removing from the land the superstitions of past generations ; yet without destroying the true form and essential discipline of the Church. We have in the main a pure doctrine, and an apostolic discipline : though I pretend not to say that, in the great changes which have taken place, some things have not been done, especially of late, which appear to me not well advised. There may be some things, I say, perplexing and disquieting to think on ; but let us feel good hope that God designeth mercy towards us. In a great and necessary change, like that which we have gone through, it is not to be expected that those who are instrumental in the guidance of events should keep always to the just

mean. In departing from Rome, there is danger of going too much to the other extreme, even as they have done in Germany and Switzerland. It behoves all good men to pray that God may bring our affairs to a happy termination."

CHAPTER XVII.

The Christening. Ordinances.

Men who have ceas'd to reverence soon defy
Their forefathers. Lo, sects are formed, and split
With morbid restlessness—the ecstasie fit
Spreads wide.
The throne is vexed; the new-born Church is sad.

WORDSWORTH.

THE next day had been fixed for the christening; and as the adjoining chapel of Merevale was dismantled, the party went to Baxterly, which was the nearest church; the babe and his nurse, with the older members of the party, being accommodated with horses, the rest walking a-foot. Maurice Neville at first refused to go, on account of the sign of the cross being used in the sacrament of baptism, which he considered as a piece of anti-Christian mummary; but was at last persuaded by Latimer not to disappoint his brother by his absence from the christening of his son and heir;—for Maurice, amidst all his extravagances, still retained a warm affection for his brother.

Baxterly Church, though not reduced, like Merevale, to ruins, had undergone many mutilations, which sadly spoiled its appearance. The altar had been torn up from the east end, and placed table-

wise in the middle of the nave. The crucifix and images had been removed from the walls by the commendable injunction of the rulers of the Church ; but the places which they had occupied were left bare and ragged, and no attempt had been made to restore the church to a decent appearance. The painted glass was partially defaced ; the heads of the saints depicted in the windows being knocked off, and the places occupied by common panes. With a laudable anxiety to conform to the injunction that there should be a “ comely and honest pulpit ” in every place of worship, the churchwardens of Baxterly had erected a monstrous rostrum of oak planks for the convenience of the preacher ; which, though not placed directly in front of the altar, according to the irreverent custom of more recent days, yet, by its size and ugliness, greatly disfigured the sacred building. Near the entrance, in conformity with the royal injunction, was placed a poor-box, having two locks and keys, one of which was kept in the custody of the minister, and the other of the churchwarden. Into this box was to be deposited all the money which the people heretofore had been accustomed “ to bestow on pardons, pilgrimages, trentals, masses satisfactory, decking of images, offering of candles, giving to friars, and upon other like blind devotions, now taken away (as it was stated) by the king’s most godly proceedings ; ” and all of which was now to be given to the poor Christian brethren. But, alas ! the piece of money which Robert Neville dropped

into the box, as he passed, sounded very much as if it fell upon an empty board. The poor, in truth, came in for a very small portion of those alms which had before been devoted, however mistakenly, to religious uses, and, it is feared, suffered severe privations, until a maintenance was provided for them by the poor-law of Elizabeth.

The ancient Norman font still occupied its proper place near the west entrance, and in it the little Hugh was duly baptised. But though the font remained the same, the baptismal service was much altered; for whereas in the First Book of Edward VI. the renunciation of the devil and all his works was accompanied by a form of exorcism, and the ancient ceremony retained of anointing with oil, and the clothing the child in a chrisom or white garment, as an emblem of purity, together with the triple immersion,—all these parts of the service were now discontinued.

When the service was finished, Latimer, at the request of those assembled, got up, nothing loath, into the pulpit; and after a long rambling discourse, sent them away in high good humour,—amused certainly, and we would fain hope edified.

The conversation at the Manor turned naturally on the ceremony in which they had been engaged.

“The good archbishop has somewhat curtailed our baptismal service,” said Latimer. “How like you it, Arnold, without the exorcism and chrisom?”

“I hold,” said Arnold, “that every particular

or national Church, represented by her bishops, hath authority to ordain and change ceremonies and rites."

"Better do away with them altogether," said Maurice: "they do but clog the godly motions of the spirit."

"Not so, my good friend," said Arnold; "ordinances and ceremonies are intended to help and assist the spirit, and are profitable for all men. The holy sacrament of baptism is ordained of Christ Himself, and may be accompanied with such ceremonies as the Heads of the Church shall order, so that all things be done unto edifying. The use of the cross, for example, to which thou and others object, is a pious custom observed in all ages of the Church, whereby they who rightly use it are reminded of the great and mysterious sacrifice of the Redeemer, through whom alone the sacrament of baptism avail-eth for salvation. It is not a private man's duty to find fault and innovate, but to conform to what the Church directs, so it be not contrary to the commands of God. Therefore, however I may have been attached, from habit, to the old form, yet seeing that in the new nothing essential is omitted, I willingly conform to the order of my diocesan."

"Thou art right," said Latimer. "Hooper was much to blame in refusing to be consecrated in the episcopal robes. John à Lasco, and the other foreigners now in England, do ill to intermeddle, as they do, in matters which concern them not. I would they were content with the hospitality afforded

them, without introducing their foreign notions into our reformed Church."

Arnold. "We have reason to thank God that our baptismal service remaineth entire and unmutated in any essential particular: nevertheless, I cannot but express my regret that Cranmer has listened to the foreigners in the changes which he has introduced into the service of the holy communion."

Latimer. "What dost thou complain of?"

A. "I like not the omission of the formal oblation of the elements, and of the invocation of the Word and the Holy Spirit, that they may be unto us the body and blood of Christ; still less of the words which have been used from the earliest times, 'The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life;' and the substitution of the new sentence, 'Take and eat this in remembrance.' It seems almost to imply an opinion that the body and blood of Christ is not 'verily and indeed taken by the faithful in the Lord's Supper,' as the Church hath always held;¹ but that the holy eucharist is nothing more than a memorial."²

¹ And as our Catechism now declares.

² The omissions here complained of have been partially remedied since, and several important portions added to our Prayer-book, especially the explanations of the sacraments at the end of the Catechism; so that the doctrine is now substantially what it was in Edward's First Book. The ancient form in administering the sacrament of the eucharist ("The body," &c.) was restored soon after the accession of Elizabeth.

Maurice Neville of course did not at all agree with the opinion of Arnold; and again rather petulantly expressed his wish that forms and ceremonies were altogether abolished; so that all reformers, of every denomination, might worship God together in spirit and truth.

"That were impossible," said Arnold, "unless thou art prepared to give up the essential doctrines of our faith. There is one Lælius Socinus, a Tuscan, and Faustus his nephew, who have revived the Arian heresy, or rather invented a worse, even denying the blessed atonement. Thou wouldst not admit him and his followers into the fellowship of the Church?"

Maurice. "I would unite in one Church all such as hold the great essential doctrine of *Justification by Faith*, and no others."

"Well, now," said Arnold, "I hold the doctrine of *Justification by Faith* as well as thou, and have no objection, if thou wilt, to call it a great doctrine; yet I see not but that there be others as great and as important—the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, the resurrection, the incarnation of our Lord, and others which have been held by the Church from the beginning—all these be great doctrines."

M. "Nay, but the doctrine of *Justification by Faith* is the keystone of the whole. Read what Paul saith to the Romans and Galatians, of our being justified by faith, and not by works."

A. "Yea, and read also what St James saith

to all Christians about the necessity of works also to justification."

M. "Speak not of St. James. His is but an epistle of straw—mere milk for babes."

"Is that thy reverence for God's word?" said Latimer. "Methinks thou regardest such portions only of the word as favour thy particular views, and treatest the rest with mighty little respect."

Maurice had no answer ready; and the good Arnold, anxious to prevent altercation, said, mildly but solemnly, "Holy Scripture containeth a vast and unfathomable fund of truth, from which, as from a treasury, the Church may draw forth streams of living water, according as they be needed, for the edification of her children, or the correction of her own faith and practice. In the first days of the Gospel, when the Jews were loath to part with their ceremonial services, and trust for salvation to their Redeemer only, it pleased God to move the holy apostle Paul to write his epistle to the Romans, and also that to the Galatians, in which the doctrine of justification by faith was straightly laid down, so that none may gainsay it. And when, in process of time, it came to pass that the Christian faith became again overlaid with ceremonies, and men trusted in their works, then was the time to bring forth again the self-same doctrine which holy Paul had before, under like circumstances, written for the edification of the Church in all ages. Hence the doctrine of justification by faith hath acquired an unusual pro-

minence at the present time ; not as being in itself greater or more important than other doctrines of revealed religion, but as being most pertinent to the present occasion, and the weapon whereby, in our actual necessities, we best meet the corruptions of Rome."

" Is it not," said Robert, " even as, in the controversy with the Arians, the doctrine of God the Son being one in substance with the Father was the great and prominent doctrine—the *articulus*, so to speak, or hinge, on which the controversy then turned between the true Church and the corrupters of her doctrine ?"

" Even so," said Arnold. " Great and true doctrines rise and fall, according to the times, in prominence, though not in real value. Thou wilt observe, that in the epistles to the Corinthians, especially at the opening of the first, as also in other epistles, great stress is laid on the essential union of the Church, and the duty of being ' all of one mind and of one judgment,' by reason that some had begun to innovate and breed schism. The time may come when the doctrine of the ' one Catholic and Apostolic Church,' rightly understood, shall be the test of a true or false Church."

" Hearest thou that, Maurice ?" said Latimer.

M. " I understand thee : thou thinkest that he glanceth at me, because I hesitate not to worship with those whom I hold to have obtained a more spiritual mind than that which thou callest the

Church. But I fain would ask thee one question : If *thou* mightest lawfully separate thyself from the Church of Rome, surely others may lawfully separate from thee ?”

Latimer, with his ultra-Protestant notions, was unable to solve this difficulty ; but the Catholic Arnold at once replied :

“ Nay, my friend ; I think not thy position tenable : on the contrary, it seemeth to me, that if it was lawful for us to separate from Rome, it standeth, for that reason, that it is *not* lawful for thee to separate from us.”

M. “ How so ? I understand not thy argument.”

A. “ I might take exceptions at the form of thy words ; but, supposing them to stand, I would ask, on what ground was it lawful for us to separate from Rome ? On none other, surely, than that Rome was become immoderately corrupt ; and that *we* established a pure communion. If, therefore, our communion be pure, then the reason for thy separation from us holdeth not : thou wouldest be separating from a pure communion without reason. But, as I observed, I might take exceptions at thy form of words ; for I hold that the bishops of our Church have not schismatically separated from Rome. When the heads of the English Church found errors and superstition to have grown up therein, it was their bounden duty to remove them, maugre the displeasure of any foreign bishop. If they found idolatry

to have become prevalent amongst poor ignorant folks, it was their duty to cause images to be removed ; if they found that the just reverence paid to saints had been abused to worshipping of them — nay, under any circumstances, it was their duty to remove from the public service such portion as must needs offend a jealous God, who has commanded that worship shall be paid to Him alone ; and if they found the service of the Church overloaded with ceremonies, even though such ceremonies might not be superstitious, but only excessive and superfluous, — still it was their bounden duty to simplify the Liturgy. Nor hath the bishop of Rome, nor any other prelate or potentate, authority to let or hinder the bishops of the English Church in that their pious work. How sayest thou, Father Latimer ?”

L. “ Truly thy argument appeareth just, though it be not exactly as I have been used to view it.”

M. “ What booteth all this argumentation about the lawfulness of disjoining ourselves from Rome, which is antichrist, and the mother of all iniquities, and therefore to be come out from, and separated from, by all such as would save themselves from her ruin ?”

A. “ ’Tis over bold to say that Rome is antichrist, seeing that she hath the creeds, the sacraments, and the true succession. Let it suffice for us that our bishops have wisely removed her corruptions ; let us beseech God that they may have under-

standing to retain that which is good ; and let us pray also, that Rome herself may yet have grace to see her errors, and reform them ; so that we may again become one fold under one Shepherd."



CHAPTER XVIII.

Days of Persecution.

These, . . . blessing God and praising Him, bequeathed,
With their last breath, from out the smouldering flame,
The faith which they by diligence had earned,
And through illuminating grace received,
For their dear countrymen, and all mankind.
O high example, constancy divine!

WORDSWORTH.

MANY happy days were passed by the peaceful family-circle at Bentley Manor. The pleasant intercourse and wholesome conversation, especially that of the worthy Arnold, had a soothing effect on the spirit and feelings of Maurice. Latimer greatly enjoyed himself in his favourite occupation of preaching. He was as popular in the poorest hamlet as he was at court. We must not too harshly judge the weaknesses of good men. To fix the attention, and win the love, of all congregations, whether high or low, were proofs of an earnestness and zeal which speak well for the sincerity of his heart; and if he was somewhat vain of his talent, we must not too severely blame him, especially since he endured God's chastisement in the body for

his error, if such it was; for it was mainly to his freedom of speech that he owed his sufferings and death.

The pleasures of his rural visit were, however, soon disturbed by circumstances over which he had no control. Every messenger from the metropolis brought the alarming intelligence of the young king's increasing sickness. Sad indeed were the prospects of the reformers,—so, at least, it appeared to outward view,—if it should please God to remove this excellent prince. At last the melancholy news of his death arrived, and cast a gloom over every Protestant. Then a gleam of doubtful hope burst forth when it was found that Edward, before his death, had, out of regard to the reformed faith, and persuaded by the ambitious Northumberland, disinherited by his will the Lady Mary, passed over Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots, and settled the crown on the Lady Jane Grey. But the English people knew full well that Mary was their rightful sovereign; and the experience of former generations had taught them the miseries which await a nation that rejects its lawful ruler. When Mary raised her standard in Norfolk, it was joined by men of every rank; and she soon found herself at the head of thirty thousand men. In like proportion the adherents of Northumberland fell off; and, after a nine-days' reign, the unfortunate Lady Jane Grey resigned the ensigns of royalty, which but for the ambitious views of her father-in-law she would never have assumed.

On entering upon her government, Mary granted a general pardon to all offenders, except the traitor Northumberland, with two of his associates. The queen's moderation, and the professions which she made, inspired hope into the hearts of those whose principles were opposed to her, that her own sufferings for religion had taught her to view with indulgence the religion of others. But by degrees her character became more known; and it was evident that she had imbibed, in no ordinary degree, the persecuting spirit of the age.

Latimer continued to prolong his visit in Warwickshire, neither anxious to court persecution by returning to London, nor, on the other hand, remitting at all in the zeal with which he preached throughout the country the doctrine of the reformation. Yet he always felt a presentiment, and expressed his belief, that preaching the Gospel would cost him his life; and sad were his forebodings respecting the coming fortunes of the Church.

One day, after he had been following his usual occupation of expounding the Scripture, and, having returned to his quiet home, was seated in the midst of his friends, fondling his godson on his knee, a man on horseback was seen to approach at full speed. It proved to be John Careless, a weaver, from Coventry, who brought news that a pursuivant, sent by Gardiner for the arrest of Latimer, had arrived at that town, and was on his way to Bentley. At this intelligence a sad shuddering fell on that peaceful

family. All but Latimer were in dismay: they urged him to take measures for his safety; but the dauntless old man, who had long made up his mind for the worst, resolved to await the event.

When the pursuivant arrived, he found Latimer not only prepared to meet him, but equipped in his travelling-dress, and ready to set off with him at once on his journey. "My friend," said he, "you are a welcome messenger to me; and be it known to you and the whole world, I go as willingly to London at this present, being called by my prince to render a reckoning of my doctrine, as ever I did to any place in the world. I doubt not but that God, as He hath made me worthy to preach His word before two excellent princes, so He will enable me to witness the same unto the third, either to her comfort or discomfort eternally."

Contrary to his expectation, the queen's messenger, having delivered his letter, departed, affirming that he had no commandment to tarry for him. It was manifest from this proceeding, that the wish of the council was to intimidate and silence Latimer, or to force him out of the realm. They judged, probably, that his constancy in persecution, joined with his great popularity, would be of more injury to them than any punishment, which they could inflict, would do their cause service. But Latimer did not choose to avail himself of the opportunity thus allowed him to escape. "Of what use," said he, "are a few more years to a worn-out old man?" He therefore at once

obeyed the summons, and set off to present himself before the council.

When he arrived in London, and passed through Smithfield, he observed, with his usual quaintness, "that Smithfield had long groaned for him." Being brought before the council, he patiently bore the taunts and mockings of the papists, and was forthwith committed to the Tower; Austin, his servant, being allowed to attend on him. Here he sustained his rigid imprisonment most patiently, and even cheerfully—maintaining still his usual pleasant speech. Being well nigh starved in the winter for want of fire, he bade the gaoler tell his master, that "if he did not look better to him, perchance he might deceive him." The lieutenant of the Tower, hearing this, thought that Latimer meditated an escape, and questioned his prisoner on the meaning of the words, and whether he really uttered them. "Yea, Master Lieutenant," said he, "so I said; for you look, I think, that I shall burn; but except you let me have some fire, I am like to deceive your expectations, and to starve of the cold."

But we must leave Latimer for a while in his prison, and record the progress of events.

The change of government brought with it a new order of things in the management of the affairs of the Church. Without attempting to defend Mary from the charge of cruelty and bigotry, it is something to say for her, that she was conscientious and consistent in other parts of her conduct. During the reign of her

predecessor, a bill for the spoliation of the bishopric of Durham had been brought in, but not passed. The spoliation she at once stopped, and maintained the bishopric in its ancient principality. The spoils of churches, the vestments and communion-plate, were diligently searched out and restored. Though unable to get back the Church-lands which had been granted to the different nobles, she at once gave up all which were still in the power of the crown,—no small sacrifice at a time when the revenues of the sovereign were very limited, and the commons always loath to grant subsidies and benevolences. For some time no cruelties for religious opinions disgraced her government. Even Cranmer, though he had signed the unjust and illegal will of Edward, was at first left at liberty. Afterwards, when innovations were made in religion, and the mass re-established, he protested strongly against the measures, and was committed to the Tower.

It was not until her unfortunate marriage with Philip of Spain, son of the ambitious Charles V., and endowed with the grasping views, though neither the ability nor generosity of his father, that Mary began that system of cruelty which has made her reign proverbial for its atrocity, and has cast a horrible stain on popery, which, in England at least, is not likely to be wiped out. Philip came to England with a full determination to reduce the nation, at any cost, under the entire dominion of Rome ; and he found in Mary's fond though misplaced attachment a ready

instrument of his views. We must remember, however, as some extenuation, that it was a cruel age; each religious party thought it necessary to send their opponents to the stake; and each party in the state consigned their defeated rivals to the block. Somerset executed his political opponent Seymour, and was himself brought to the block by Northumberland, who, in his turn, suffered with his amiable daughter, when Mary was in power. Calvin burnt Servetus; Cranmer persuaded the young Edward to sign the death-warrant of the Maid of Kent; Henry VIII. executed men of all religious persuasions, without much distinction; Elizabeth also permitted many unnecessary executions. Cruelty reigned throughout the whole of Europe. Charles V. is said to have put to death 50,000 of his subjects; and the French king cannot have destroyed much fewer. But what right have we to cast odium on an age for cruelty, who have witnessed the French revolution and the continental wars? Let us pray God there be not a spirit amongst us in the nineteenth century, which, if it be not curbed, will cast into the shade the horrors of former generations.

The year 1555 commenced with a solemn thanksgiving for the reconciliation of the Church with Rome, an absolution having been pronounced on the nation by Cardinal Pole, in the name of the pope. This was followed by a sharp persecution of the Protestants. No class of persons was exempt, from bishops to the poorest clergy: gentlemen of good estate,

weavers, apprentices, fishermen, the highest as well as the lowest—all these were put to death without even the evidence of witnesses : certain articles were exhibited to them ; and on their making answers which were judged heretical, they were, on the evidence of their own words, sent to the stake. Not content with condemning them singly, the cruel tyrants now began to send the Protestants to be burned in companies. Six were consumed in one fire at Canterbury, six more at Colchester, two women at Ipswich, two priests and four tradesmen at Smithfield ; two men, one blind and the other lame, at Stratford-le-Bow ; eleven more men and two women in one fire at the last-mentioned place. What was even more repulsive and revolting than these cruelties to the living, was the exhumation and burning of the dead bodies of Fagius and Bucer, who had been buried at Cambridge. One's blood runs cold at the recital of these horrid barbarities, inflicted on persons, the majority of whom were exemplary in life and character, remarkable above others in maintaining, even to the death, what they verily believed to be the truth. Yet it is a wholesome subject of meditation in these days of ease and lukewarmness. We know not how soon persecution for religion's sake may again arise ; and it is to be feared that we are little prepared to meet it when it comes.

Distinguished above the rest in eminence of station were the three bishops, Cranmer, Latimer, and

Ridley. They had been in their various departments the great supporters of the Reformation. Latimer, as we have seen in the foregoing narrative, was less eminent for learning and doctrinal consistency than for a certain active zeal and honest sincerity—qualities which contributed not only to render him one of the most popular of the reformers, but to forward the work of reformation as much as the exertion of more learned men. No doubt, in the published sermons of Latimer which remain to us—but which, it must be remembered, were mere extemporaneous discourses, taken down in short-hand by his hearers—inconsistencies and errors might be pointed out. The zeal even of good men is liable to run into extremes; and he may with justice be accused of falling into ultra-Protestant views. Ridley, on the other hand, was a true English Catholic Churchman: “he was wise in council, deep of wit, and very politic in all his doings. He was such a prelate, and in [almost] all points so good, godly, and ghostly a man, that England may justly rue the loss of so worthy a treasure.” He excelled Cranmer in firmness, and Latimer in learning; and it was to him, perhaps more than to any other individual, that we owe whatsoever of true Catholic spirit was maintained in the English Reformation.

These two holy and eminent men suffered at the same stake on the 16th of October, 1555. The circumstances attending their death are sadly interesting. The night before his execution Ridley was very

joyful, and invited the mayor and his wife, in whose house he was kept, to be at his wedding the next day; at which the mayor's wife wept: but Ridley told her, "though his breakfast would be sharp, he knew his supper would be sweet." He remained in such composure of mind, that they were all amazed at it. Next morning he and Latimer were led forth to execution. Latimer was now upwards of eighty years of age, and of most venerable appearance. On passing the prison of Cranmer, they both looked up, hoping that he would have seen them; but he was engaged in disputing with some friars, and was not at the window; but on hearing that they had passed by, he looked after them with great tenderness, and, kneeling down, prayed earnestly that God would strengthen their faith and patience in that their last and painful passage. When they came to the stake, they embraced each other with great affection; Ridley saying to Latimer, "Be of good heart, brother; for God will either assuage the fury of the flames, or enable us to abide it." They then both prayed, and fitted themselves for the stake. Latimer divested himself of his old coat and cap, in which he had appeared a withered and crooked old man, and resolved to play the man: he stood upright in his shroud, a most venerable person, and, turning to his companion in martyrdom, he said, "Be of good comfort; we shall this day light such a candle in England as will not easily be put out." The smith then fastened an iron chain round their bodies, and gunpowder being

hanged about them to hasten their death, the torch was put to the wood ; and the fire causing the powder to explode, Latimer was put out of his pain, and died immediately ; but Ridley had a more lingering torment ; for they threw on the fire so much wood, that the flame could not break through it, so that his legs were consumed before this was observed. At last one of those present opening the passage to the flames, it put an end to his life. Thus died these two excellent bishops : the one, for his piety, learning, and solid judgment, the ablest man of all that advanced the Reformation ; and the other, for the plain simplicity of his life, esteemed a truly good and sincere Christian.

The constancy of Cranmer was put to further and more difficult trial. Soon after the execution of his brethren, he was removed from his prison, and lodged in the house of the dean of Christ Church ; where, instead of the hard prison-fare, he was delicately fed and lodged, allowed to take recreation in the pleasure-grounds, and visited by many persons, who, under the garb of friendship, flattered and betrayed him. His constancy, which had been proof against the terrors of prison and death, was undermined by these allurements ; and he was induced first to sign a submission, and afterwards a recantation of his opinions.

Notwithstanding these submissions, the popish party had the incredible baseness, as well as cruelty, to bring him to the stake, where he redeemed his

former weakness by a resolute witness to the truth. Thus perished one whose temper, calmness, prudence, and presence of mind, had, humanly speaking, steered the ark of Christ through the perils of the Reformation. If any are disposed to cast odium on Cranmer's character, or doubt on his sincerity, for having for a while yielded to temptation, let them be very cautious lest they are condemning themselves. Cranmer's courage had been so many times put to the test, both during the reign of Henry and of Mary, that no reasonable doubt can exist as to the sincerity of his faith. His temporary fall was occasioned by the beguilement of flattery and ease. Of all ages, the present, perhaps, has least reason to rail against those who sacrifice their faith or principles under such temptations. Let us pray that Cranmer's repentance may have been sincere, and the Christian boldness with which he met his cruel fate acceptable before God: and if persecutions should come upon ourselves, let us imitate his virtues rather than his failings.

Cranmer, though a principal instrument of Providence in the work of reformation, has left to the English Church certain blemishes which bear the impress of his character. Besides the leaning which he exhibited towards the foreign reformers, and the modifications and suppressions of doctrine arising from this source, which, if God had permitted them to proceed, would have rendered our Church but one of many sects, Cranmer had a decided tendency to Erastianism.

He did not sufficiently view the Church as a divinely constituted body, deriving its authority directly from God. He too much mixed it up with the state, and subjected it to civil control. It may, however, be reasonably doubted, whether the Erastianism of Cranmer, which induced him too much to subject the Church to the temporal power, may not have been the means employed by Divine Providence of saving the English Church from the same fate as that which befell the Scotch. Be that as it may, we still feel the evils of our subjugation. Our convocations are suppressed by civil authority ; our bishops nominated by the minister of the day ; our benefices looked on as property rather than trust. Let us not, however, be sure that these things have not been mercifully permitted by Providence for our good. Let us learn to avail ourselves to the utmost of those advantages which we derive from the position in which God has placed us ; and pray that if we should be destined to enjoy greater liberty hereafter, we may have grace to use it aright.



shines forth the brighter. But we must not too harshly blame the Protestants of those days. The differences between them were merged, not as they now too often are, in the deceitful calm of latitudinarian indifference, but in the overwhelming flood of common persecution.

Amongst those who resorted to Bentley Manor was Lawrence Saunders, a zealous and excellent clergyman, attached to the cathedral of Lichfield, where, with undaunted faithfulness, he preached the reformed doctrine. It was on his head that the storm first fell. When the council resolved on severe measures, the zeal and notoriety of Saunders pointed him out as a fit example whereby they hoped to intimidate the Protestants. He was arrested early in the reign of Mary; and after much suffering, he was led to execution on the 8th of February, 1555, at a place called the Park at Coventry. As he walked barefoot to the place of execution, he fell on the ground and prayed; then he walked forward with a cool and undaunted courage; and, after again praying when arrived at the spot, he took the stake to which they chained him in his arms, and kissed it, saying,—“Welcome the cross of Christ! welcome everlasting life!” and being fastened to the stake, and fire being set to the faggots, “full sweetly he slept in the Lord.” On the morning before his execution he wrote to his friends at Bentley a letter full of consolation and encouragement, bidding them make haste to follow him, if it were the will of God.

'Tis wonderful what zeal and determination the spirit of religion is wont to infuse into the hearts even of the tenderest and weakest: delicate women, who, one might have supposed, would have perished beneath the first blast of persecution, have been known to go through sufferings such as, in the present age of ease and comfort, we are scarcely able to conceive. The execution of Saunders, instead of discouraging his friends, only served to make them the more resolute in their determination to persevere in the faith, and to resist what they believed to be contrary to God's truth; and not only the hardier sex, but even the females of that Christian community were inspirited, by the example of the first who fell, to endure for Christ's sake unto the end.

It was one night about two months after the death of Lawrence Saunders, that a party of men, consisting of the mayor of Coventry, with a sheriff's officer, together with Friar John, who had made himself an active agent in these persecutions, and several inferior officers, arrived at the gate of Bentley Manor with a warrant for the arrest of Maurice Neville. His proceedings amongst the Gospellers at Coventry had given umbrage to the papist party, and had been represented to the bishop; who, being a violent partisan of the Romish faith, had resolved to make an example of him. The porter at the outer gate was at first inclined to refuse admittance to the party; but being informed that they had the queen's warrant, and being warned of the danger of resistance,

he unbarred the door, and suffered the officers with their attendants to enter. The magistrate was well acquainted with the Neville family. He had undertaken the business with much reluctance ; and on his way had pondered on the possibility of aiding Maurice's escape. Maurice, he knew, slept on the ground-floor. The way into the upper part of the house was, as the reader will remember, by a staircase leading from the hall. Accordingly, placing himself at the foot of the staircase, he directed his attendants to go up into the chambers above, and make search for their prisoner. No sooner were they gone on their errand than he hastened to the room in which Maurice slept, and warning him of the danger, exhorted him to escape for his life. Confused by the sudden alarm, and urged by the entreaty of his friend, Maurice Neville hastily threw some clothes around him, and descending from the window, sprang across the moat, and was soon buried in the forest.

Meanwhile the officers had come to the apartment of Robert, and, not knowing one brother from the other, had secured him, and brought him in custody into the hall or principal room in the house. It was a fearful scene. The hall crowded with armed men ; the aged mother, with hair dishevelled, beseeching them to pity her son ; the wife, with her infant in her arms, clinging with affectionate alarm to her husband ; the other little ones weeping and wondering ; and the terrified domestics wailing and lamenting around.

When the magistrate saw that they had taken Robert into custody, he at once informed the men of their mistake.

"How now, my men! you have secured the wrong bird. This is not the man for whom our warrant was issued, but Robert his brother. Haste, and search the house for the right one."

The men, headed by Friar John, instantly dispersed through the house; and after an ineffectual search, both above and below, returned with the intelligence that Maurice had escaped from the window.

"However," said Friar John, "we have got one of them; and this fellow is as well worth catching as his brother."

"Nay, Master Friar, we must not exceed our warrant," said the magistrate; "it is not lawful to take one man for another."

"It is our duty to arrest all heretics," said the Friar. "I bear testimony that this man is a heretic; and if thou favourest his escape, as perhaps thou hast that of his brother, take heed that thou art not called on to answer for it thyself. I demand that he be taken before the bishop; and his lordship will dismiss him, if he thinks fit."

The good magistrate had not nerve to contradict the peremptory friar; the terrors of the Ecclesiastical Court stood before him; besides, he felt sure that Robert would be at once set at liberty; and

therefore at length he yielded to the friar to take him with them to Coventry.

The morning was now beginning to dawn; and the officers having secured their prisoner, placed him on a horse between them, and conducted him on the road to Coventry. Meanwhile Friar John, with one of the attendants, proceeded on another errand with which they were charged. Alice Clifford had long avoided giving offence, and with unobtrusive zeal had silently though diligently laboured amongst the brethren to confirm their faith; and though well known to be one of the principal abettors of the reformed faith in that neighbourhood, yet she had hitherto escaped accusation: ~~but~~ having been compelled by her imperious husband to attend the mass, she had, contrary to a statute recently enacted, refused to accept the holy water, and openly professed that it was not such water, but the blood of Christ, which cleanseth from sin. It was for this declaration, made publicly before the people, and reported by the malicious Friar John, that a summons was issued against her.

When the officers arrived at the house of Clifford, they found the family assembled together, as was the custom, at their morning meal; and on shewing their summons, the capricious Marmaduke burst into a most ungovernable fury.

"What!" said he; "arrest the wife of a true son of the Church! Know you not friend from

foe? I will teach thee to come here with thy citation." With that, plucking his dagger from its sheath, he seized on Friar John, while his servants pinioned the arms of the other; then placing the dagger at his breast, he commanded him to swallow the citation. The astonished friar at first refused to comply; for, well knowing the spiritual authority with which he was armed, he could not believe that any man would have the boldness thus to interrupt him in his office: but when he observed the violent demeanour and gestures of the infuriated madman, trembling with rage, and ready to plunge the dagger into his breast, he had no alternative but to obey his command. Clifford laughed loudly at the friar's efforts to perform his task; and pouring out a cup of wine, bade him wash down his meal with that, and take heed that he came not near his house again; and with that he sent him away.

However, Clifford's violent temper was easily subdued. He was a coward as well as a blusterer; and when, some days after, another citation was sent, backed by a sufficient force to compel obedience, he very quietly submitted himself, and entreated the bishop's favour; nay, so abject was this haughty man become that he actually assisted in conveying his wife to prison.

Thus was the gentle Alice dragged from her home and family, where she had been used to live in comfort, though not in happiness, and cast into a

damp and loathsome dungeon in the Close at Lichfield. But she endured her sufferings with a meek and quiet spirit, her faith being surely based on that Rock which is the true foundation.

CHAPTER XX.

The Examination.

These, constrained to wield the sword
Of disputation, shrunk not, though assailed
With hostile din, and combating in sight
Of angry umpires, partial and unjust.

THE grief and dismay of the afflicted family at Bentley Manor may more easily be conceived than described, deprived at once of so many of their dear friends ; one driven from his home, an outcast and wanderer ; two others, most dear to them, cast into prison and threatened with a cruel death. These afflictions were indeed sad and bitter : all they could they did, which was to unite in frequent prayer, that God would be merciful to their suffering friends, and either restore them to liberty, or enable them to take their persecutions patiently and to His glory.

For some while, notwithstanding their frequent applications, no sure intelligence reached them of the fate of Robert Neville, except that he was confined in the Marshalsea at Coventry. After a few weeks, however, the afflicted wife was comforted by the following letter or narrative, which well illustrates the sufferings that the reformers of those days were called on to endure, and the spirit with

which, we trust, many of them underwent their heavy persecution.

To my entirely beloved wife Mary Neville.

The peace of conscience which passeth all understanding, the sweet consolation, comfort, strength, and boldness of the Holy Ghost, be continually increased in your heart, through a fervent, earnest, and stedfast faith in our most dear and only Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

I thank you heartily, most loving wife, for your letters sent unto me in my imprisonment. I read them with tears more than once or twice: with tears, I say, for joy and gladness, that God has enabled you to endure in faith, and in a willing submission and obedience to His will in all things. These your letters, and the hearing of your most godly proceedings and constant doings from time to time, have much relieved and comforted me. My constant prayer is, that God, who of His great mercy hath begun a good work in you, will finish it to the glory of His name; and, by the power and inspiration of His Holy Spirit, so strengthen, establish, and confirm you in all His ways to the end, that we may together shew forth His praises in the world to come, to our unspeakable and everlasting consolation. Amen.

Let us never cease to pray, yea, even for our enemies; and, that we may be the better able to forgive, it is good to call to remembrance the greatness and multitude of our sins, which Christ daily and hourly forgiveth us; and then we shall, as St. Peter affirmeth, be ready to cover and hide the offences of our brethren, be they never so many.

And forasmuch as the Holy Ghost calleth us to

affliction in this world, let us endeavour, through His help, to lay our foundation so sure, that no storm nor tempest may be able to overthrow nor cast it down. Have no fellowship, dear wife, with those who corrupt the word of God through their tradition, and add thereto their own devices, worshipping stocks and stones. Be not thou partaker of their sins. Beware of those who shall advise you to somewhat bear a little with the world, as they do, for a season. There is no dallying with God's matters. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Remember Lot's wife. Remember the words of the prophet Elijah: "Why halt ye between two opinions?" Remember what Christ saith: "He that putteth his hand to the plough, and looketh back, is not fit for the kingdom of God." And seeing hitherto God hath advanced us as good soldiers in the forward, let us not play the coward, nor draw back to the rearward. Let us set before our eyes such as have behaved themselves boldly in God's name, as Stephen, Peter, Paul, Daniel, and those who cast themselves into the burning fiery furnace; and, in our own days, Anne Askew, Lawrence Saunders, John Bradford, and other faithful witnesses, who have already suffered for Christ's sake.

If I would have given way to worldly reasons, I might well have been moved, first, by parting with you, my beloved wife, and my dear children, who are yet of a tender age, and young, and apt and inclinable to virtue and learning, following in the steps of their dear mother,—their state, I say, might well have moved me; and then the parting with my possessions with which God hath blessed me beyond the common sort of men; and the leaving my dear home, and estate, and friends.

But all these things, God be praised, move me not, so that I should fall from the faith. Truly, at the first sight of the sheriff, when I was delivered into their hands, my nature did somewhat shrink back ; yet, before I came to the prison, by the working of the grace of God, and through His goodness, all fear departed from me, insomuch that I wept for the superabundance of joy and gladness, musing much on the great mercies of God, and, as it were, saying to myself after this sort : “ O Lord, who am I, on whom Thou shouldst bestow this great mercy to be numbered with Thy saints that suffer for the Gospel’s sake ? ”

Not long after I was brought to prison, there came unto me Mr. W. Brasbridge, Mr. Phineas, and other friends, earnestly advising me to submit myself when examined, and saying, that it was not myself, but my brother Maurice, against whom the bishop was incensed ; and that I might easily obtain favour. I told them, that if it were God’s will to release me, I should rejoice to go back to my dear family ; but that I would not purchase my release by a single word which was against my conscience : at the same time I earnestly lifted up my heart to God, that I might do the thing which should please Him. And then, when they had given over their entreaties, my heart, methought, was wonderfully comforted ; and I thanked God that I was not moved by my well-thinking friends to do that which was unworthy of His righteous cause : and, debating this matter with myself, these considerations came into my mind. I have from time to time, with good conscience (God is my record), urged all with whom I have had any conference to be no dalliers in God’s matters, and to shew themselves, according to their light and knowledge,

heartly, earnest, constant, and stable in maintaining the truth, and not to give place one jot contrary to it. Now, thought I, if I shall withdraw myself, and make any shift to draw my 'neck out of the collar, I shall give great offence to the weak brethren in Christ, and advantage to the enemies to slander God's word. It will be said, He hath been a great boldener of others to be earnest and fervent, to fear no worldly perils and dangers; but he himself will give no such example. Wherefore I thought it my bounden duty to God and man, being by the great goodness of God marvellously called and appointed hereunto, to set aside all fear at perils and danger, all worldly respects and considerations; and as I had, according to the measure of my small gift in time past, unfeignedly moved, exhorted, and persuaded all that profess God's word, manfully to persist in its defence, not with sword and violence, but with suffering and loss of life, rather than do aught contrary to God's word,—so, the hour being come to ratify and confirm the same to the hearts of all true believers by my example, I resolved, by the mighty assistance of God's Holy Spirit, with much peace of conscience, willingly to sustain whatever my cruel persecutors should do against me.

Thus remained I a prisoner in Coventry ten or twelve days without being called to my answer by the masters, contrary to the laws of the realm. The second day after the bishop's coming to Coventry, Mr. Warren came to the guildhall, and commanded the chief jailor to present me before the bishop. I fear me Mr. Warren is no friend, and purposeth evil against me: God give him repentance, if it be so, of his sinful malice. I was brought before the bishop in the house of one

Denton. His lordship was attended by the chancellor and one of the masters of the city, with divers others, amongst whom I perceived that malicious Friar John, who was the first cause of my arrest. 'May God forgive him the wrong!

The bishop began with the protestation that he was my bishop, for lack of a better; and advised me to submit myself.

To which I answered with calmness, that I knew not of what I was accused.

He asked me whether I was learned.

I said I was moderately so.

The chancellor of the diocese, standing by, said I was a master of arts.

Then my lord the bishop laid to my charge my not coming to church.

Here I might have dallied with him, and put him to the proof. Notwithstanding, I answered him, through God's merciful help, that I desired greatly to worship God in His temple; but that I had been prevented therefrom by the images there erected contrary to His written word; and by divers rites and ceremonies to which I could not in conscience agree, inasmuch as they were sinful and erroneous, and contrary to the holy law of God.

He answered, that he came to teach, not to be taught.

I was content, I told him, to learn of him, so far as he was able to teach me by the word of God, or at the least not contrary to the same.

"But who shall judge the word?" said the bishop.

I answered, Christ was content that the people should judge His doctrine by searching the Scriptures, and so was St. Paul.

"But what," said he, "if you take the word one way, and I another?"

Then I observed that I was content that the primitive Church, nearest the Apostles' time, should judge betwixt him and me.

But he refused; alleging that he was my bishop, and therefore I must believe *him*.

"If you, my lord, say that black is white, must I also say as you say, and believe the same, because you say it is so?"

The chancellor observed, that I was arrogant, because I would not give place to my bishop.

I then said to the bishop, "If you will be believed because you are a bishop, why find you fault with the people that believed Latimer, Ridley, and Hooper, that were also bishops?"

"Because," said he, "they were heretics."

"And may not you err," said I, "as well as they?"

My lord made no answer, but commanded me immediately to be committed to some tower, if they had any other than the common gaol,—saying he would at the end of his visitation rid his diocese of such wolves.

I said, "Wherever it pleaseth you, my lord, I am content to go;" and so I was returned for that day to the common gaol from whence I came.

On the day after, being Friday, I had warning to prepare myself to ride with certain fellow-prisoners to Lichfield, there to be imprisoned during the bishop's pleasure. At the first these tidings somewhat discouraged me, fearing lest I might be sent to die in prison before I came openly to my answer; for my health had already suffered during my confinement. But this thought I rebuked immediately with God's word, and corrected

dear Son Jesus Christ. Being thus occupied, I found a daily improvement in health, increase of peace in my conscience, and many consolations from God, by the help of His Holy Spirit, and sometimes, as it were, a glimmering and foretaste of the life to come; all for His Son Jesus Christ's sake, to whom be all praise for ever and ever.

On the bishop's first coming to Lichfield after my imprisonment, I was called into a private room next to my prison, where I found his lordship seated. Before whom, when I came, I saw none but his officers, chaplains, and servants, except it were an old priest that chanced to be there. I was somewhat confounded, and lifted up my heart to God for His merciful help and assistance. My lord asked me how I liked my imprisonment; to which question I gave him no answer. He proceeded to persuade me to be a member of his Church, which had continued so many years. As for our Church, it was known, he said, but lately, in King Edward's time.

"I profess myself a member of that Church," said I, "which is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ being the first corner-stone. This Church hath been from the beginning; and was founded in this country, as some say, by Paul the Apostle; and continued for many hundred years before it became corrupted."

Here his lordship interrupted me, and bade me hold my peace, calling me a proud, arrogant heretic. Then he began to propose certain questions unto me, the which, when I refused to answer except in open court, he declared that he would send me back to prison, and that I should have neither meat nor drink till I had an-

swered him. Then I lifted up my heart to God, that I might stand fast, and agree with the truth of His most holy word.

The first question the bishop asked me was this—
How many sacraments Christ had instituted?

"The sacrament of Baptism," said I, "and the Lord's Supper."

"No more?" said he.

I answered, that "to all those that manifest a true and unfeigned repentance, a sure hope, trust, and confidence in the death of Christ, to such I grant that ministers have power, on the authority of God's word, to declare His remission of sin."

Here interrupting me, he would maintain that I called this a sacrament. On this point, however, I would not greatly contend with him, because the matter was of little importance, although, in so charging me, he did wrong; for I did not call it a sacrament.

Then he would know my mind, what I thought of the presence of Christ's body in the sacrament. Upon this I humbly besought God to give me grace, that I might speak discreetly, seeing that it is a great mystery. I acknowledged that the body and blood of Christ were present in the sacrament, even as Christ Himself, when He took the bread and blessed it, said, "This is My body."

"Dost thou, then, acknowledge the real presence of the body and blood of Christ?"

"I believe," said I, "that the body and blood of Christ our Lord are 'verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper.'"¹

¹ See Church Catechism.

"Thou admittest, then, the doctrine of transubstantiation?"

"Nay, my lord," I answered; "if it be meant that the substance of the bread and wine are changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ our Lord, I have no warrant in Scripture to say that; neither did the ancient doctors or fathers hold such doctrine; only I admit that the faithful do verily and indeed partake of the Lord's body. This is the doctrine taught by the ancient fathers of the Church, and is agreeable to holy Scripture."

Hereupon his lordship seemed somewhat perplexed, and consulted privately with those who stood by. At last he spake to me again, and said—

"I much fear me thou art a desperate heretic, and withal a subtle one. Do not suppose, however, that thou wilt escape thy merits."

He then bade the officers take me back to prison, from whence I write to thee, my dearest wife, this account of my sufferings and trials. It is now two days since I was examined before the bishop; and I expect again to be summoned before him to-morrow. God meanwhile hath greatly comforted me. At times I am troubled by the adversary, who puts into my heart thoughts of my great unworthiness to be counted in the number of those who suffer for the truth's sake, and makes me fear lest I shall fall away at the last. Then I answer within myself, that God chooseth whom He will to bear witness to His truth, and that to all such, if they remain faithful, He giveth grace in time of need.

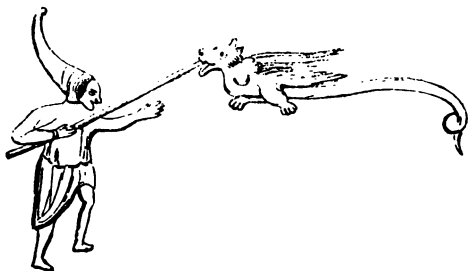
O may the grace and mighty consolation of the Holy Spirit, from our loving and merciful Father, for His dear Son's sake, continually dwell in your heart, my dear

and faithful and beloved wife ; may His holy angels pitch their tents about you and your little ones, and suffer you not to be tempted above your strength ; that so in the end we may dwell together in God's kingdom, and sing praises unto His Name with His angels and archangels for ever and ever ! Amen, Amen !

ROBERT NEVILLE,

A prisoner abiding God's pleasure.

It may be well imagined that this most Christian letter brought a cheering consolation to the sorrowing family ; and though it held not out the hope of their again meeting in this world, yet it prepared them to bear with patience whatsoever chastisement it might be the will of God to inflict.



CHAPTER XXI.

The Prisoners.

Oh! there is never sorrow of heart
That shall lack a timely end,
If but to God we turn, and ask
Of Him to be our friend.

THE only human consolation which Robert Neville met with during his imprisonment was the occasional company of his faithful friend Austin Bernher, who, through the kindness of the gaoler, was permitted to visit him, and bring him tidings of his friends and family. Austin Bernher was an extraordinary man, and performed deeds of heroism which few others would have dared to attempt. Perhaps his peculiar tenets of predestinarianism made him the less careful of a life which he knew to be in the hands of God. In the hottest rage of persecution, when even a slight kindness shewn to those accused of heresy subjected him who performed it to the danger of the same fate, and it was almost death even to speak to a heretic, he made it his business to attend on the sufferers in their afflictions, to convey to them spiritual consolation, and perform for them such offices of kindness as might comfort them under their afflictions; especially by travelling from place to place, from one prison to another, and being the bearer of

letters and messages between those who had been torn from each other by the stern commands of the law. Those only who have learned by experience the bitterness of such affliction can appreciate the comfort of these attentions, when offered by a warm-hearted and attached friend. He attended Latimer and Ridley in their last imprisonment, and is spoken of by both in terms of affectionate regard, nay, even with love and veneration. He accompanied them also to the stake, and witnessed their last sufferings.

After the death of his old master, Bernher passed much of his time in Warwickshire, where he was diligent in maintaining, according to his views, the cause of the Reformation; and when the persecution came, he was of great comfort to those who suffered for opposing the restoration of papal corruptions.

From Bernher, Robert Neville had been made acquainted with the state of his family and friends; and through him, also, he learned that Alice Clifford was even then confined within the walls of the same prison.

One day, when Robert was rather more cast down than usual, Bernher came unexpectedly into his cell, bringing with him a companion. What was Robert's joy in recognising his old friend and preceptor William Arnold! Their interview was full of joy as well as sorrow: but Austin interrupted their communications by informing Robert that he had obtained permission for them both to go to the dungeon in which Alice Clifford was confined, in order

that they might together receive the consolations of religion, of which they had so often before been partakers in each others' company. She too had been apprised of the circumstance, and anticipated a mutual comfort in seeing friends so dear to her once more. Though unprepared for the interview, Robert Neville hastened with alacrity to avail himself of the opportunity of again meeting, it might be for the last time, one in whose society he had mingled, ever since his boyhood, in so many varied scenes of joy and friendship. It was a melancholy pleasure, and his spirit trembled at the thought of the interview. Many a day had passed since he had shed a tear ; but now sad thoughts of former times rose before his mind's eye, and he felt almost unnerved. Accompanied by Bernher and Arnold, he followed the gaoler through a long dark passage, until they arrived at a small but strongly barred door, to which the gaoler applied a ponderous key, whose harsh grating caused an icy pang to shoot through the heart. The room into which they were admitted was small and gloomy. Alice was sitting on a low pallet in one corner of the apartment ; her face was pale and wan, but a mild lustre was kindled in her eye, speaking of faith and resignation. The same brightness and intelligence which had characterised her in her younger days seemed to have returned after many years, but sobered and chastened by sufferings faithfully endured. A gleam of light from a close-barred window fell on the book which she

was reading—it was the Bible which had been given her several years before by Hugh Latimer, and which was now her sole companion, and the solace of her prison. As Robert Neville entered, she made an effort to rise from her seat, but sunk back from weakness. Robert took her outstretched hand, and pressed it to his lips, while his tears fell upon it.

“Forgive my tears, dear Mistress Alice,” said he; “I thought to have borne myself more calmly; but the sight of one so much beloved and esteemed in this sad situation unmans me.”

“Nay,” said she, cheerfully, “sorrow not for me; rather let us rejoice together. Why should we grieve at being called on to endure the same afflictions which Christ our Saviour hath endured before us? Let us take the cross upon our shoulders; let us follow our great Example, who by His own blood hath dedicated and hallowed the way which leadeth to the Father—that is the light to which no man can attain save through Him, the Fountain of everlasting joys.” She then raised the Bible, and read as follows from the place which was open before her: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you” (1 Pet. iv. 12).

Robert. "And have you indeed learned to take your sufferings so patiently, and to look forward with such fervent hope of glory? Truly, we men have reason to learn firmness from you of the weaker sex."

Alice. "Let us rather all of us look to Christ the Captain of our salvation, who was made perfect by suffering; who, 'though He were a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered; and became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him.'"¹

R. "Yes, dear lady; for have not we the same glory before us: 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.'"² 'The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.'"³

"You cannot outdo me," said Alice, with vivacity, "in quoting texts, which contain the most abundant and blessed promises: 'Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them that are in trouble, by the comfort whereby we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ: and whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salva-

¹ Heb. v. 8.

² Rom. viii. 18.

³ 1 Pet. v. 10.

tion, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer ; or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the suffering, so shall ye be also of the consolation.'"¹

Alice laid the Bible beside her, and raising her eyes with a look of inexpressible sweetness, almost brilliancy, she added, " Ah, Master Robert, the days have been when I was gay and over-mirthful, when the world seemed full of brightness and pleasure ; but never, believe me, did I feel such true and heartfelt satisfaction as I do in this cold dreary dungeon, when reading the blessed promises of the Gospel, or when repeating the sweet Psalms of holy David, which surely were designed for all God's servants, and were no less suitable in the mouth of Jesus Himself than of His humblest servants. ' O Lord,' " she exclaimed, " ' Thou hast dealt graciously with Thy servant, according to Thy word. Before I was troubled, I went wrong ; but now have I kept Thy word. Thou art good and gracious ; O teach me Thy statutes. It is good for me that I have been in trouble, that I may learn Thy statutes.' Oh, what a consolation there is in these inspired supplications ! how they harmonise with the spirit which is truly fixed on God !" She then repeated a part of the twenty-seventh Psalm, especially dwelling on the beginning and concluding part—" The Lord is my

¹ 2 Cor. i. 3-7.

light and my salvation ; whom then shall I fear ? The Lord is the strength of my life ; of whom then shall I be afraid ? I should utterly have fainted, but that I believe verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. O tarry thou the Lord's leisure ; be strong, and He shall comfort thy heart : put thou thy trust in the Lord."

The holy cheerfulness of Alice had a marvellous effect in restoring confidence to Robert Neville. "What !" thought he to himself, "can a delicate woman thus suffer affliction, and shall I for a moment allow myself to repine and despond ?"

They conversed together for some while, occasionally touching on the condition of their friends, but going back almost instinctively to the word of God, and the riches of Christ's mercy. At last Father William proposed that they should receive the holy Communion, perhaps for the last time. Upon this Alice was filled with joy and consolation : "I never thought again to have had opportunity to receive the holy Communion, except from the hands of those from whom I should not have dared to accept it ; but God hath not forgotten me, and hath sent thee His servant to give me this pledge of His love : this is comfort and refreshment ; this is indeed a sure evidence of His love." Austin, who had prepared the elements for the purpose, then joined with them in the service of prayer ; and Father William administered the holy Eucharist according to the ordinance of the Church. Great was the consolation which all

received from this holy Sacrament. They felt themselves as it were joined anew with Christ, prepared to endure whatsoever sufferings it should be His will to lay upon them, and full of a sure hope of meeting Him in glory. Before the blessing, they all stood together on the floor of the prison, and joined with solemn fervour in chanting the *Gloria in excelsis*; and after receiving the benediction of God's minister, the two prisoners parted, with hearty commendations of each other to God's favour and protection.



CHAPTER XXII.

The Sufferers for Conscience-sake.

And can ye drink
The cup that I in tears must steep;
Nor from the whelming waters shrink,
That o'er me roll so dark and deep?
Then be it so—my cup receive,
And of my woes baptismal taste.

KEBLE.

IT was a chill and misty day in November, when two persons might have been seen cautiously traversing a secluded part of the Forest of Arden. The last leaves of autumn were yet hanging on a few withered boughs which had been broken by the wind, and the condensed mist fell in large pearly drops upon them as they made their way through the tangled underwood. For a moment they paused and looked around them, as if uncertain of their path. Then taking a direction where the ground began to slope downwards, they came to a small and shallow brook, which appeared to serve them as a clue; for when they arrived at the stream, they changed their course, and proceeded upward along its course. The brook soon brought them into a still wilder part of the forest, which was rough and

broken into rocks. At length they came to a place where the rock formed an abrupt precipice, at the base of which the stream was flowing. "This," said Austin Bernher, "is the place."

His companion looked around, but was unable to see any object which he sought.

But Bernher, leading him round a small thicket of brushwood, desired the other to follow him up a steep path, where the rock was notched so as to afford a footing. After clambering up a few rough steps, aiding themselves by the tangled roots of a birch-tree, they stood on a small platform, at the end of which was a fissure just large enough to admit the body of a man. When they had passed through this fissure, the aperture widened into a small room, in which they found the object of their search.

Stretched on the ground upon a bed of leaves, over which were spread a few blankets, lay a man the picture of despair. His beard, unshaven for many weeks, hung in shaggy locks over his breast, while his glazed and sunken eyes seemed buried in his head.

The wretched man turned with apparent difficulty on his couch as Bernher entered the cave; but seeing who it was, he stretched forth his hand in glad recognition. Austin set down a basket which he had brought with him, and his companion then approached.

"Is it possible," said he, "that I behold in this pitiable condition my friend Maurice Neville?"

into a sheep-walk, so there will be no need of these buildings—they will be suffered to fall into ruin. And the land, which used to support the whole monastery, besides labourers, will now serve only to eke out the revenue of an extravagant and needy nobleman."

Proceeding onward, the three companions descended the woody bank; and crossing the small meadow, and the causeway between the pools, arrived at the battered ruins of Merevale Abbey.

Very different was the scene from that which now meets our eye. When we look in the present day upon the beautiful ivy-mantled ruins of Tintern or Fountains, or the still interesting though scanty remains of Merevale, it is with something of a pleasing recollection of other days, which had their distinct associations, differing, in many respects, almost entirely from our own. Romantic thoughts arise of days and things gone by—days which we can scarcely realise in our minds; so different were they from those in which we live. The comforts and luxuries with which we are surrounded—the downy couch, the rich furniture, the works of art—are strange contrasts to the hard living, the exact discipline, the fasts and vigils of these men of religion, mistaken though in many points we believe their religion to have been. The bustling scenes of business, where every man is in the fever of active occupation, has little in common with the times and scenes in which the abbot and his convent performed their daily round of calm devotion;

tell the deep source and permanency of affection once implanted, and how, after many years, such thoughts still occupy the heart?),—all these presented themselves before his mind as he rested his head on his breast, and grasped his knees violently.

“Let us not bewail her fate,” said Arnold; “yea, let us rejoice rather that she hath been thought worthy to bear witness to the truth.”

The poor man seemed to catch a new thought: a glow came upon his cheek.

“And did she, then, endure well her sufferings, and glorify God in her death?”

Arnold. “Yea, and in her life too; for she hath endured much affliction.”

Maurice. “O, tell me—tell me; I can bear to hear it all.”

A. “They thought to subdue her constancy by persecution, and cast her into a noisome prison. And many times was she examined and questioned—it is said, even with torture; but she remained faithful unto the end. Long ago would she have suffered death, but that the sheriff of the past year refused to execute her. And when she knew that her hour was fixed, still she shrank not. ‘As for death,’ said she, ‘I do not much regard it. When I behold the lovely countenance of Christ my dear Saviour, the grim face of death doth not greatly trouble me.’ Also, before her death, when two Romish priests were sent to her, she refused to be shriven, affirming that she had

made confession to Christ her Saviour, at whose hands she humbly hoped for forgiveness. During the night previous to her martyrdom, she was wonderfully cheerful and pleasant, shewing at the same time great seriousness and devotion of spirit, inso-much that the majesty of the Spirit of God did manifestly appear in her, expelling from her heart the fear of death. She spent her time in prayer, and in reading and talking with those who came to comfort her. She would also kiss the book of God, and declare that it was given her by the most worthy Bishop Latimer, whose steps she longed to follow.

“ At last, at eight o'clock, the sheriff came to her chamber, and told her that she had but one hour to live : at which words, being roughly spoken, she was somewhat confounded, but soon recovered her spirit, and said, ‘ Mr. Sheriff, your message is welcome to me ; and I pray God that He will make me worthy to adventure my life in His cause.’ As she passed through the town, guarded by a number of billmen, she leant on Austin and me, who were permitted to accompany her to the place of execution.

“ Having been so long shut up in a close, noisome prison, the length of the way, the great pressure of the people, and the sudden change of air, made her faint ; so that when she arrived at the place of execution, she was unable to stand : upon which a cup of wine was brought unto her from the sheriff's house, which she took in her hand ; and

having received, was greatly moved, saying, that it reminded her of days long gone by, and of the pious wish of good Bishop Latimer, that 'if she drank the cup of sorrow, it might be for her greater joy:' as in truth it had been; for God had been pleased by affliction to wean her from the vanities of the world, for which she rendered Him hearty thanks. And then raising the cup, she drank of it; saying, 'In this cup I pledge all those that unfeignedly love the gospel of Jesus Christ, and pray that we may meet again in glory.' Whereat the people shouted, but were repressed by the officers. Then she gave the cup to her friends next her, who tasted it, and passed it on to others; so that a great number did drink with her, especially women—for which I learn that they were afterwards put to open penance by their priests. When chained to the stake, she shewed such a cheerfulness as passed all human understanding; her countenance glowed with a heavenly joy, and her deportment was so patient, that all that had honest hearts wept to see her; and many with groans did cry, 'Shame on the cruel tyranny of the papists!' When the flames burnt around her, she never struggled or cried; but only lifting up her clasped hands towards heaven, quickly expired. She suffered indeed less severity than many: the undersheriff, at the earnest request of her friends, having provided materials for a fierce and quick fire, which soon destroyed her mortal body. Thus did this blessed martyr drink of the same cup, and so truly

was she baptised with the same baptism as her beloved Lord and Saviour."

During the whole of this dreadful narrative, Maurice oftentimes groaned deeply; and when it was concluded, as if unable to endure the thoughts of the harrowing scene, he threw himself back and closed his eyes, his lips moving in prayer.

After a while he again raised himself, and inquired with some eagerness,—

"And Robert, my dear good brother, he too is doomed to suffer. And doth he also endure his persecution as becometh a soldier of Christ? Yea, I know he doth, and will glorify God, and acquit himself bravely."

Arnold. "He doth indeed endure manfully. He hath had many questionings before the bishop; and to all he answereth respectfully, but firmly, and will retract nothing that is according to God's law; yea, rather by his answers he confounded his persecutors, until the bishops resolved to have him burned. He is condemned to die on this day week. I saw him but yester-eve, after he had been told of his condemnation, and thought to find him cast down; but he is rather joyful, and full of spiritual comfort, albeit without overmuch excitement. And, lo, he hath entrusted me with this letter for thee, which he besought me earnestly to deliver."

Maurice eagerly stretched forth his hand to receive the letter, and pressed it with a trembling emotion to his lips; but from excessive weakness

was unable to open it. Arnold therefore unfolded it, and placed it again in his hands, whereupon he read as follows :

VERY DEAR BROTHER,

I commend myself to your love and affectionate remembrance. This cometh to advertise you that the day is fixed whereon I shall glorify the Lord, as I trust, by my death, and be joined to the number of those who have borne their testimony to God's truth.

I thank God that I am nothing moved otherwise than with thankfulness that I am deemed worthy to follow my Redeemer's steps ; and pray for nothing but that I may have grace to endure unto the end. Howbeit one thing grieveth me, namely, when I think on thee, dear brother. I know thy sincerity, and thy sufferings and zeal for the truth ; yet it concerneth me much to think that thou hast been led away to league thyself with those who have separated themselves from the reformed Apostolic Church, and have caused schisms in the communion of the faithful, and have given much cause to the papists to exult against us. I beseech thee, dear brother, pardon my freedom of speech in thus earnestly beseeching that thou wilt give thyself in prayer and humbleness of mind to the consideration of this matter. And, I entreat thee, read what holy Paul declareth in his Epistles to the Corinthians, and to Titus and Timothy ; and also what our blessed Lord Himself saith in His discourse with His disciples, on the need of brotherly love and union amongst all such as would be His true disciples. If I could but hear that thou hadst joined thyself again to the communion of the Church, I should indeed die in comfort, and in the sure hope of meeting

thee with all my dear friends in that place where all is harmony and love.

These are, it may be, the last words which thou wilt hear from thy loving brother,

ROBERT.

From the prison in the Bishop's Palace,
Lichfield.

When Maurice finished reading, the letter dropped from his hands, and he melted into tears. The long memory of former days, the pleasant scenes which they had witnessed in each other's company since first they roamed together when boys in the forest, the long-trying affection of his excellent brother, and his own too frequent moody sullenness—these things came to his remembrance with a force and vividness which he had never felt before. Then he accused himself of having been in some degree the cause of his brother's arrest, and blamed himself for having fled from the hands of the officers.

“Good father,” said he to Arnold, “since I have lain sick in this wild cave, and have often watched through the dreary night, listening to the hooting of the owls and the sighing of the wind, as it hath rushed through the crevices of this bare rock, and still more latterly, since I have felt the hand of death upon me,—many times have I thought on the matter on which my kind brother writes; and God hath led me to bethink myself, that I have allowed a supposed zeal for His truth to lead me

into courses which my conscience cannot approve ; and to gender a bitterness of spirit not according to Christ's love. I have often thought, in my vanity, that the faith of Robert and Alice, and thine too, Arnold, was not of that stuff which would endure in the day of persecution ; and I have presumptuously imagined that I myself should most glorify God when the time of trial should come upon us. But, God be thanked, I have lived to know the weakness of my own faith. When first I fled into this cave, oftentimes did I bitterly reproach myself that I had been the cause of my dear brother's apprehension ; and when at length, in the hope of saving him, I had resolved, as thou knowest, Bernher, to yield myself to those who sought my life, I was stricken with this disease, and unable to leave my hiding-place. How many weary days and nights have I lain revolving in my mind my own faithlessness and vain presumption ! O pray for me, good Arnold, and thou too, Bernher, that my faith may be increased, and my understanding directed to discern the truth "

They both knelt by the side of the sick man's pallet, and Arnold prayed aloud, beseeching God in his behalf, and entreating that He would sanctify His fatherly correction to him, and renew in him whatsoever was decayed by the fraud and malice of the devil, or by his own carnal will and frailness ; and, more especially, that in whatsoever he had erred and gone astray, He would give him true

repentance, and restore him to the unity of the Church.

The prayers being ended, Maurice earnestly besought Arnold, that, having heard his true confession and repentance, he would pronounce absolution on him for his presumptuousness in departing from the unity of the Church, and despising God's ordained ministers, and taking upon himself, in his ignorance, to minister in holy things. This request Arnold complied with; Austin Bernher meanwhile looking on in silence.

Maurice was much comforted in spirit after receiving absolution from the minister of the Church; but the excitement which he had gone through had exhausted his feeble frame. For an hour or more he lay motionless, as in death, insomuch that his companions thought that he had departed; but he again revived for a short space, and, after many expressions of holy satisfaction, and hope to be reunited with his brother and other dear friends, he sank back, and expired without an effort.

His two friends composed his remains in the best manner they were able, and on the night but one following they conveyed his body secretly to the burial-ground of the ruined abbey of Merevale; and there, since no open funeral was allowed to one excommunicated by the bishop,—there, in the dead of night, with none present but themselves,—the abbot performed over him the last solemn service, and, in

sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, consigned his body to its long resting-place.

Such is a true picture of the sad persecutions endured by those earnest men, many of whom were, humanly speaking, the instruments of God in effecting the work of the Reformation. Let us learn to emulate their constancy, while we avoid their errors.

We are accustomed to look on the persecution under Mary as a dreadful day to the reformed Church—and so, in truth, it was ; but the deepest darkness has its ray of light. It has been said, and the saying is not without truth, that the Reformation made greater and surer progress in Mary's reign than it had before. In one point of view, certainly, the condition of the reformers was improved, namely, that *they were sufferers, and not persecutors*. Instead of desecrating churches, and rushing into wild excesses, of which some had before been guilty, they were bearing testimony to the truth by the sacrifice of their own lives ; and the Church was in training for that more sound condition in which it afterwards came forth, and which it might never have attained, had it not passed through the fires of persecution.



CHAPTER XXIII.

Conclusion.

Hail, Virgin Queen ! o'er many an envious bar
Triumphant—snatched from many a treacherous wile !
All hail, sage lady ! whom a grateful isle
Hath blest, respiring from a dismal war
Stilled by thy voice.

WORDSWORTH.

HAVING thus followed the steps of the Christian sufferers through the melancholy period of the Church's persecution, the remaining portion of our narrative is more cheering and comfortable.

Not many days after the sad events recorded in the last chapter, as Robert Neville was meditating with a mixture of sadness and consolation on his condition, resigned perfectly to the will of God, yet not without regretful thoughts at the prospect of leaving his dear wife and children, and being cut off thus in the midst of his days, he heard the steps of many persons hastily approaching along the passage which led to his cell ; and, when the door was opened, his wife rushed into his arms. She was followed by Arnold and Bernher, leading his children ; and instead of the sad and melancholy aspect of a mourning wife and family which had come to take a last farewell of a beloved husband and parent, the countenance of them all was lighted up with joy.

The days of persecution were over — Mary was no more ; and Elizabeth reigned in her stead.

We need not describe the joy and gratitude of the happy family when they again found themselves in peace and safety at their home. None can truly judge of the happiness of security but those who have experienced the bitterness of persecution. Even to those who are most resigned to death, a reprieve must be received with thankfulness, as a gracious boon from Heaven.

The accession of Elizabeth was the signal for universal joy to a nation so long harassed by cruel tyranny. The prison-doors, within which so many pined, were thrown open ; hundreds of exiles, who were passing their days in foreign lands, were recalled to their country ; and the reformed faith was again established.

When the pope heard of Elizabeth's accession, he sent word to her, " that it was a great boldness in her to assume the crown without his consent ! yet, if she would renounce her pretensions, and refer herself wholly to him, he would shew a fatherly affection to her, and do every thing for her which was consistent with the dignity of his apostolic see." But the days were gone by when kings and queens received their crowns from the hands of an Italian bishop ; and the presumption of the pope in making such a claim was laughed, as it deserved, to scorn.

By the merciful providence of God, the succession of the bishops derived from the Apostles was

preserved ; and the English Church, sound (comparatively) in discipline and faith, remained for many years one united body—the whole nation joining, as it was right they should, in the faith and ordinances of their ancient apostolic communion.

This is a point very much to be regarded, that, during a considerable portion of Elizabeth's reign, *the reformed Catholic Church of England, embracing the whole nation, was one and undivided.*

And much as we may object to some parts of the conduct of the queen, especially her impoverishment of the already straitened Church, in opposition to the earnest remonstrances of its guardians, still it behoves all English Churchmen to bless God for having raised up Elizabeth to be His instrument in the consolidation of our distracted Church, rescuing it from the dangers of popery and puritanism, and establishing it on a solid and just foundation.

All that remains is, that we should briefly record the subsequent fortunes of the various persons with whom we have been made acquainted.

Robert Neville lived at Bentley Manor many years with his beloved wife and family, occupying the honourable place of a country gentleman and justice of the peace in the county of Warwick—a good specimen of that true-hearted, high-minded, and truly English body of men, who long have been, and still continue, the strength of the nation. Well educated, religious, temperate in his habits, firm as regarded the duties of his station and office, he was

preserved by God to do much good in his generation, and spread around him, within the sphere of his influence, the fragrance of a good example.

Not so Marmaduke Clifford, who gave way to intemperate and bad habits; was detested by his neighbours, both rich and poor; and at last was killed in the forest by a fall from a runaway horse, which he had goaded to fury by his cruelty.

Friar John was not heard of for some while; but when, in the subsequent part of Elizabeth's reign, the papists, who had at first conformed to the discipline of the reformed Church, began to erect a schismatical and separate communion, and went on to plot treason against the government, the friar, having involved himself in seditious practices, and being detected attempts to stir up the people to rebellion, was found guilty, and executed with divers others.

It would seem that the touching scene which occurred at the death of Maurice Neville, and other considerations, had its due weight on the mind of Austin Bernher; for we find him, soon after the accession of Elizabeth, rector of Southam, a renowned preacher, and conforming to the ordinances of the reformed Church, having been ordained, probably by Latimer, at the time of the troubles. He employed his leisure hours in collecting the sermons of his old master, of which he has given to the world a volume, containing many valuable passages illustrative of the times.

Our excellent and revered friend William Arnold, having been deprived of his living during the persecution under Mary, on account of his refusal to admit images into his church, and being now in advanced age, resolved to pass the few remaining years of his life in the neighbourhood of his old home. His personal wants, which were few, were amply provided for by the pension which he enjoyed. Robert Neville desired that he should become an inmate of Bentley Manor; but he preferred occupying a small house adjoining the ruined monastery: and here, with the aid of Robert, and from his own slender resources, he devoted himself to the restoration of the dilapidated church. The roof and walls were still in tolerable repair, except those of the south aisle, which had well-nigh fallen. These he caused to be supported by a substantial buttress, until he, or some one after him, should be able to rebuild them. He restored the beautiful tracery of the windows, and with great care and perseverance collected the scattered fragments of the ornamented glass, which were broken and strewn around; and received with satisfaction many portions which had been preserved by the people in the neighbourhood, and were now piously returned; so that the ancient chapel began to resume its former beautiful appearance. The exquisitely carved rood-loft,¹ which had

¹ A *rood* is an image set on a pole; most commonly an image of our Saviour on the cross, with St. Mary and St. John at the foot on each side. A *crucifix* is an image of our Lord

once been desecrated by images, still occupied its place as a gallery ;—and, if we *must* have galleries, it is one of the best specimens to be met with in the kingdom. The altar-tombs, which contained the bones of the former benefactors, he caused to be removed from the dilapidated chapter-house, and placed within the walls of the chapel ; and greatly was he rejoiced to find the brass effigy of the founder, Robert Ferrers, still unhurt amidst the ruins. Thus with pious diligence he restored, as far as his means allowed, the beautiful chapel in which for so many years he had worshipped God ; and had the indescribable satisfaction, before his death, of officiating as parish-priest within its renovated walls, and again gathering around him a Christian congregation.

Far different, indeed, was the scene from that which the chapel had once presented, when the surplined choir poured forth the melody of their rich voices in honour of God. But it must be remembered that, in its altered condition, no tapers burnt before the forbidden idol ; and the worship of God was conducted, if with less pomp and show, yet without the superstition exhibited in former ages.

O, when shall we discern the just medium be-

on the cross. To set up these in churches, especially over the altar, seems directly contrary to the second commandment. But to the use of simple *crosses*, in any part of a church, not the slightest objection can justly be raised. On the contrary, how can we be more piously reminded of the great doctrines of our faith ?

tween superstition and irreverence? When shall we learn truly to worship God in the beauty of holiness? Grateful as we rightly are for the blessing of a purer faith, when shall we learn to emulate the pious devotion of those less-favoured men, who deemed that their time and substance were most profitably used when freely devoted to God's honour? When shall we restore to its just splendour the plundered and dishonoured Church of God, and still retain the purity of our own reformed faith?

Let us hope and believe that the day may not be far distant!

CHAPTER XXIV.

Reflections on the Reformation.

Faith is not built on disquisition vain—
The things we must believe are few and plain ;
But, since men will believe more than they need,
And every man will make himself a creed,
In doubtful questions 'tis the safest way
To learn what unsuspected ancients say ;
For 'tis not likely we should higher soar
In search of heaven than all the Church before ;
Nor can we be deceived, unless we see
The Scriptures and the Fathers disagree.

DRYDEN.

AT the distance of three hundred years, we ought to be able to look back on the events of the Reformation with calmness, and to discern more justly than those who lived amongst them, the springs and tendencies of that great revolution. If we are not able to do so, it is but one amongst many proofs of the vitality of traditionary feelings, and the tenacity with which antipathies and prepossessions engrain themselves in the hearts of men from generation to generation.

Let us endeavour, with as much absence of prejudice as we may, to take a brief survey of the Reformation in its various bearings.

In the first place, it must be looked on as a

removal of abuses, and a restoration of the Church to her ancient purity. This is the true view of it. This is what the English reformers themselves aimed at, and in the main accomplished. They compared the existing doctrines and practices of the Church with Scripture; and if any thing was plainly contrary to the word of God, they abolished it. But the instances of positive repugnance to the plain letter of Scripture, though sufficiently numerous, were few in comparison with the mass of corruption which had grown up by the misinterpretation of Scripture, or the overlaying of primitive usages. For the purification of these abuses, Cranmer and the other reformers had recourse to the writings of the ancient fathers, and the historical reminiscences of the early Church. "I protest," says Cranmer, "that it never was in my mind to write, speak, or understand any thing contrary to the most holy word of God, or else against the holy Catholic Church of Christ; but purely and simply to imitate and teach those things only which I had learned of sacred Scripture, and of the Catholic Church of Christ from the beginning, and also according to the exposition of the most holy and learned fathers and martyrs of the Church." Ridley speaks to the same effect: "When I perceive the greatest part of Christianity to be infected with the poison of the see of Rome, I repair to the usage of the primitive Church." Latimer declared that he had taught and preached nothing but "according to holy Scripture, holy fathers,

and ancient interpreters of the same.”¹ Farrar, Hooper, Philpot, Bradford, and Coverdale, add their testimony to that of Cranmer and Ridley: “We doubt not, by God’s grace, but we shall be able to prove all our confessions here to be most true, by the verity of God’s word and consent of the Catholic Church.”² Philpot speaks still more plainly. At his fourth examination, the Bishop of Gloucester asked him, “I pray you, by whom will you be judged in matters of controversy which happen daily?” Philpot answered, “By the word of God; for Christ saith in St. John, the word that He spake shall be judge in the latter day.” The bishop then asked him, “What if you take the word one way, and I another way? who shall judge then?” Philpot answered, “The primitive Church.” The Homilies abound with appeals to the ancient fathers collectively and individually. The Canons also contain

¹ Latimer says in one of his sermons, “These doctors [or fathers], we have great cause to thank God for them; and yet I would not have them always to be allowed. They have handled many points of our faith very godly, and we may have a great stay in them in many things; we might not well lack them; but yet I would not have men to be sworn to them, and so addict as to take hand over head whatever they say: it were a great inconvenience so to do.”—Vol. i. p. 197. He is objecting to an interpretation of a text by Origen, and does not seem to have a just apprehension of the distinction between the fathers as *individual expositors* of Scripture, and *concurrent witnesses* to any fact or doctrine.

² Confession at Oxford, 1554.

similar recognition of their value, as in particular the one respecting preachers: "In the first place, they (the preachers) shall see that they never teach any thing for a discourse which they wish to be religiously held and believed by the people, but what is agreeable to the doctrine of the Old and New Testament, and what the Catholic fathers and teachers and ancient bishops have collected out of the same doctrine."¹

It is most important to observe what entirely different ground the reformed Church of England occupies from the Romanist on the one hand, and the continental Protestants on the other. The Romanist considers each existing pope as infallible, and that whatsoever he pronounces from time to time, either from Scripture or elsewhere, is to be received as truth. The ultra-Protestants consider each man to be a pope himself, and at liberty to take the Scriptures and interpret them according to his own fancy; hence the variety of sects into which they are divided. The Anglican Churchman believes that the truth was settled by Christ and His Apostles once for all at the beginning, and that Scripture containeth all things necessary for salvation. Where Scripture speaks plainly, he considers its decision as final: where difference of opinions exists as to the sense of Scripture, then he appeals—not to the pope, who is but a fallible man; not to his own

¹ These passages are quoted from a letter by the Hon. and Rev. A. Perceval, recently published.

equally fallible judgment—but to the concurrent testimony of the ancient Church. In some cases where usages, innocent in themselves and sanctioned by antiquity, had become connected with superstition, the English reformers thought it the safer course to discourage or abolish them—as Hezekiah brake in pieces the brazen serpent made by Moses, which had become an object of superstitious worship. Such was the principle of the English Reformation ; as may be collected from an infinite variety of passages, besides those which I have already quoted.

On this principle image-worship was condemned, as it had been by the ancient Church, as contrary to the plain word of God. Perhaps there was no greater practical change effected than the removal of idols from churches. Nothing but their absolute removal could root out the degraded superstition with which thousands of poor ignorant people every where throughout the country regarded them, and direct their worship from the lifeless block to the one eternal invisible Jehovah. And when we see the strange infatuation of the ignorant, and the tenacity with which even educated Romanists, unconsciously from a spirit of party-zeal, still defend their use, we are led the more to admire the wisdom and goodness of Almighty God, when with His own finger He wrote His peremptory command against them. Again : transubstantiation, though pretended to be founded on Scripture, was found to be contrary to the doctrines of the ancient Church. And the

pope's authority over other bishops, and the notion of an universal prelacy was discovered to have no sanction in Scripture, and to be contrary to primitive practice. Thus were these and other corruptions removed, and the Church stood forth in her ancient simplicity.

If the reformers had kept strictly to this principle, and carried it out with moderation, it had been well. But unfortunately, human passions mixed themselves up with the proceedings of the times, and greatly marred the boon which the providence of God had bestowed. On the Continent the evil exhibited itself far more perniciously than in England. Here in England there were many wild spirits which were with difficulty controlled; yet the Reformation was conducted mainly by the sovereign and the bishops. On the Continent it was effected generally in opposition to the ruling powers of the Church, and partook more of the nature of a democratic movement; hence its violence and imperfections. From intercourse with foreigners, the English imbibed much of their sectarian views, and a spirit of resistance to authority,—a temper of most unhappy tendency, even though it may be sometimes necessary to act apparently as if influenced by it. If, for instance, we are commanded by our ecclesiastical rulers to worship images, or deny our Lord, there seems to be no alternative but to refuse even to death, and endure patiently whatsoever trials God may be pleased to lay upon us. But when the same

spirit, abused, as it is almost sure to be, to excess, leads men to resist their lawful rulers in lawful matters,—as, for instance, to refuse to wear a cope or a surplice, or to kneel at the holy communion; when the conscience, we may almost say, degrades itself by resistance to such things as these; when men proceed to greater lengths, set up conventicles, separate from a Church, the general doctrine of which they acknowledge to be true; when they refuse to worship with the Church of their fathers, on the futile plea that it is joined with the State;—in these cases, it is clear that a wicked spirit of sectarianism is the true principle of action; and unfortunately such a spirit was generated at the time of the Reformation, and is rife among us even to the present day.

Again, the Reformation was the occasion of *a most unhappy schism*. We, of course, believe that the Romanist is responsible before God for this schism. We believe that the English bishops were perfectly justified in rejecting the authority of the pope, and were constrained in conscience to abolish the corrupt practices which had overspread the Church; and that the Romish Church, instead of excommunicating us, ought to have followed our example. Still, there can be no doubt that the schism then caused in the Western Church was deeply to be deplored. Cranmer strongly felt the inconvenience of the isolated position in which the English Church was placed. Even the continental reformers were aware

of the advantage which the Church of Rome had over them in being (outwardly at least) one united body, whereas they themselves were divided into a multitude of sects; and at one time a scheme was set on foot for drawing up a series of articles which should embrace all the various denominations of Protestants. Had the foreign Protestants acted in the same spirit of moderation which, for the most part, characterised the English reformers—had they been content to remove what was plainly contrary to Scripture and ancient usage, and to preserve what possessed the venerable sanction of antiquity—especially, had they retained the apostolical or episcopal succession of the ministry, whereby the Churches of Christ are linked together with the Apostles as their common ancestors, and are, in fact, by common descent one great family,—the union might profitably have been effected, and great strength have accrued to the reformed Church. But as it was,—the continental Protestants, running into wild excesses, and some of them rejecting fundamental articles of faith or discipline, some denying the doctrine of the atonement, some corrupting the ancient doctrines of the sacraments, and falling into a variety of heresies,—it was a most blessed and providential circumstance that no formal union was effected between them and the Church of England.

Other incidental evils resulted from the schism. It was not to be expected that men, when influenced by strong feeling, should discern the just line be-

tween the necessary assertion of independence and the sin of schism. The pope had for several ages occupied a great place in the eyes of Christendom ; and if the bishops thought it right, as indeed it was, to remove their dioceses from his usurped dominion, individual Christians deemed that they had equal right to withdraw from the communion of their bishops. Hence by a natural, but not a legitimate deduction, men arrived at the false notion of religion being based on liberty of opinion and the right of private judgment,—principles which, carried to extreme lengths, have generated the host of sects and schisms that disgrace the Christian name, and impede the progress of the kingdom of God. But it was no vain notion of this sort which influenced the best amongst our English reformers. It was no liberty, but rather a stern *restraint* of conscience, which moved them to obey the word of God, and follow in the footsteps of the Apostles, instead of maintaining the abuses which man's corrupt will had superinduced. It was no liberty of conscience, but a dominant necessity, which led the martyrs to the stake. The spirit of martyrdom dwells not in the arrogant feeling of the right of private judgment, but in the strong duty of obedience. Most vainly, therefore, does the schismatic assert, that in wantonly separating from the Church, and following the imagination of his own heart, he is treading in the steps of the English Church. The best reformers

were men of very different mould from the modern dissenter.

The notion of liberty of conscience arises partly from a confusion between human and divine law. God has given a revelation of His will, and established a Church upon earth; and each man is bound, at his own personal risk, to believe the revelation, and become a member of the Church: "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."¹ There is no liberty of conscience here as regards God's command. We are not to believe what we choose, but what God has revealed; and as there is one faith, so there is one baptism—as one Spirit, so one body, the Church, to which, and to no other body, we are bound to belong. We are responsible to God,—and vast indeed is the responsibility,—but no *human* power can justly coerce us. No authority of man can or ought to force us to our salvation; nor can any human power save us from condemnation. To God and His holy Church, which He has instituted, we are bound at our peril; and in that very absence of all religious liberty consists our freedom from human control.

It is the mixing up of these two authorities which is the main source of modern dissent: men falsely arguing, that because the State has no right to control their will, therefore the Church has no claim to

¹ Mark xvi. 16.

their obedience and communion. And this notion, though very different from that of our best reformers, was no doubt promoted by a false application of their example.

We must next view the English Reformation in its *political* relation. To separate, as some pretend, religion from politics, is a thing absolutely impossible. They always have had, and always will have, a powerful influence one on another. Sometimes, as in the Great Rebellion, politics will be the ostensible surface of action, and religion form an under-current ; sometimes, as at the Reformation, religion will be the most prominent, and politics be kept more in the background. The soundest wisdom is, instead of attempting to separate one from the other, to bring the hallowing influence of Christian faith to bear on every department and movement of the State. Unfortunately, the too frequent practice is to adopt the contrary process, and suffer the bitterness of political animosity to intrude into religion.

When differences of religious opinion spring up in a nation, and the minds of men are excited, a field is open for ambitious politicians, of which they seldom fail to avail themselves. The aspirants for power place themselves at the head of the respective abettors of the different sides ; goad them on to asperity ; lead them into open violence ; and then religion most unjustly bears the blame of those angry feelings and turbulent deeds, the real origin of which

has been the selfish ambition of worldly men. Of all systems, popery has in every age been the most readily moulded to bad political uses ; it is, in fact, essentially a political, rather than a religious system—it is worldly ambition placing itself at the head of those superstitious feelings which are inherent in the human breast, enlisting with them often far higher principles, but using them for its own purposes of aggrandisement.

The quarrel of the king with the pope had divided the kingdom into two parties ; and the advocates of the latter, urged on by foreign influence, at once assumed that violent and rebellious attitude, which, with little intermission, they have since exhibited in English history. In truth, the political papist is essentially a rebel : acknowledging an authority which he is bound to obey, even to violent opposition against his sovereign, he is always ripe for schemes of insubordination, into which it may suit his own views, or those of his superiors, to lead him : hence the turbulence which characterises popery in every nation where it is not predominant.

Again : the English Reformation was accompanied by a *revolutionary transfer of property* from one set of men to another, namely, from the Church and monasteries to private individuals. There can be no question that the spirit of plunder was at the bottom of a great many of the proceedings of those days. It influenced the king, as well as his nobles ; even pious reformers themselves, though, we hope,

from better motives, encouraged the unjust appropriation of the revenues of monasteries. The result was, that large estates, which for ages had been dedicated to God,—including not only the property of the religious houses, but the revenues of bishops, and the impropriations which of right belonged to the parochial clergy,—instead of being held sacred, or applied to those analogous uses in God's service, which a better knowledge of His will would have dictated, were violently seized, and for the most part applied to the enrichment of private persons; whereby the community, instead of receiving any benefit, was deprived for ever of the advantages which might have been derived from them. The English Church has never recovered from the spoliation; and never did we feel her inadequacy more strongly than we do at present. Every year that passes does but serve to increase her insufficiency to administer the offices of religion to the community over which God has set her. And it is no small reproach of a Protestant people, that in devotion of their means to God's honour, and in liberality in His service, they thus fall far short of the Church which they reformed. Worldliness, private selfishness, covetousness, carelessness for God's honour, are the lamentable result of those evil principles and evil deeds by which the Reformation was disgraced.

We have now arrived at an age when it may be hoped that we shall be able to view these things in their true light; and while we retain the inestimable

boon of a reformed faith, and eschew all those corrupt and superstitious practices which defaced the Church of the middle ages, we may, at the same time, endeavour to restore the decency and splendour of her services, rebuild her ruined temples,—and, if we cannot give back, may at least replace the funds of which she was stripped, and re-establish the Church in that sufficiency of outward means which she enjoyed before she was reformed. Let us hope that the time is at hand when men shall willingly offer their substance, as in days of yore, upon the altar of the Lord; when our English Churchwomen shall deem it a privilege to work altar-cloths for God's house, instead of toiling for the adornment of their persons; and when some portion of the cumbrous and superfluous decorations, with which excessive wealth and a vitiated taste crowds our private dwellings, may be devoted to the decent magnificence of the houses and service of God. But we have other restorations to make besides the mere outward fabric and decoration of our Church. We have to bring back the pious and reverential habits of ancient days, and restore the unity which has been broken—broken, perhaps, of necessity, but at the same time most unhappily. When God looks down on this Christian land, and beholds our unhappy divisions, our unholy worldly manners, who can say that He does not view them with even greater abhorrence than He before viewed the superstition of Rome? Our forefathers erred through want of

knowledge; we, who boast of light, and yet offend, perhaps may have a heavier charge to answer. *They* fell into superstition from an excess of ignorance; do not *we*, from our irreverence and unbelief, even more dishonour God? and may we not expect the greater condemnation?

But let not those who urge a restoration of the Church be accused of desiring to revert to the corruptions and superstitions of Rome. We believe that God has so overruled the course of events, that at the time of the Reformation, when men's passions were leading them astray, He interposed His divine authority so that the reformed Church not only most providentially retained the true episcopal succession which links her with the Apostles, but also preserved, not by her own wisdom and prudence, but by God's merciful ordinance, the true apostolic doctrine in her liturgy and formularies.

Though subsequent ages have in practice wandered from the truth, until schism has appeared to some to be of the essence of Protestantism, yet in the work of our reformers,—what they retained, as well as what they added,—we still have a rule of true orthodoxy, both in doctrine and in practice. Built on the foundation of Scripture, and preserving all the essentials of apostolic usage, the LITURGY OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH presents a basis to which not only Protestants might return with consistency, but on which they might meet their Romish brethren. Only let English Churchmen act up to the real prin-

ciples of the Church to which they belong, build up her altars in every parish, restore her festivals and apostolical ordinances, and preach her evangelical truths ; and we may again see her the mother of us all. We need never despair of a reunion, while our English Prayer-book, the providential type of the English Reformation, remains entire ; and we may yet live to see the day when the English Church shall be not only united in itself, but be chosen by the providence of God as the rallying point to which He shall gather the disjointed fragments of His Church universal upon the earth.



APPENDIX.

NOTE I.

A FEW remarks, elucidatory of the present volume, are here added in the Appendix, which could not have been introduced into the Preface without anticipating the interest of the story.

The foregoing narrative is almost entirely *founded on facts*. The well-known character of Latimer has been placed in a prominent point of view: first, as stated in the Preface, because he fairly represents the sentiments of a large body of the reformers; secondly, because there is a raciness of humour and sterling English honesty in his character which it does one good to contemplate, though his theological views may have been defective; and, thirdly, because he was really conversant with the scenes amongst which he is described—scenes with which the writer is himself well acquainted by birth and early associations. Latimer often visited Warwickshire, and resorted to Merevale Abbey; with the head of which, William Arnold, it is reasonable to suppose that he was on terms of friendship. The real name of the kinsfolk of Latimer was Glover; a respectable family resident at Mancetter, near Atherstone. But as I have not adhered strictly to the facts of their history, but only availed myself of such circumstances as might illustrate the times, I have thought it better

to change their name and place of residence. The name of the lady represented under the character of Alice Clifford was Lewes. "Mrs. Lewes," says Fox, "was a gentlewoman born, was delicately brought up in the pleasures of the world, taking great delight in gay apparel, and such like foolishness; with which follies the most part of the gentlefolks of England were then, *and are yet*, infected." Afterwards she began to think seriously of religion; and such was the effect of her change of views, that she began to wax weary of the world, to be very sorrowful for her sins, and inflamed with a love of God, and desirous of serving Him according to His word. The character of her husband, and his conduct in making the messenger swallow the citation, and afterwards delivering his wife up, her imprisonment, and the circumstances of her death at Lichfield, especially her pledging the bystanders in a cup of wine, are all taken, with little variation, from Fox's *Book of Martyrs*.

John Glover, the elder of the two brothers, was a gentleman, living also at Mancetter. He was "of a constitution naturally low and melancholy," and at one time of his life "persuaded himself that he had verily sinned against the Holy Ghost." Afterwards, it would seem, he regained his trust in God, and was "so devoted to meditation, prayer, and praise, that he led a life almost celestial. The most part of his lands he distributed to the use of his brethren, and committed the rest to the guidance of his servants and officers, that he might the more quietly give himself to his godly study, as to a continual sabbath-rest."

Robert, the younger of the two, was more vigorous in body and more learned, having been educated at

Cambridge, of which university he was master of arts. At one time he held an office in Merevale Abbey. He married a niece of Latimer's, and had three sons and one daughter.

The apprehension of the one brother instead of the other is according to the fact. The beautiful and pious letter, written by Robert from his prison to his wife, is given, with the exception of the latter portion, almost as it is found. John Glover, "when he learnt that his dear brother had been apprehended for him, had little comfort of life. With such sorrow of heart was he possessed, that he would gladly have put himself in his brother's stead, if his friends had not otherwise persuaded him, shewing that in so doing he might entangle himself, and do his brother no good. In great sorrow and anxiety he passed his time, until partly through his mental anxiety, and partly through a cold which he took in the woods, where he used to lie and conceal himself, he was seized with an ague, and not long after left that life which the cruel papists had so long sought for." Other circumstances, especially the termination of Robert Glover's life, were different from what they are represented in this tale. A monument has recently been erected in Mancetter Church to these sufferers for conscience-sake; and the account of their sufferings, as related by Fox, has been published in a small volume by the present incumbent, the Rev. B. Richings.

From these extracts it will be seen, that I do not profess to give a narrative of the life and sufferings of the real martyrs; but have availed myself only of such incidents of their lives as might help to give interest to my story, and illustrate the events of the Reformation.

NOTE II. *Page 33.*

Some good friends of the Church are displeased with the supremacy of the sovereign; and the same is often tauntingly objected to the Church by dissenters; but there does not appear to be, in theory, any just cause for objection or reproach, however in practice the State may have made encroachments. Elizabeth expressly declared, "that she would have all her loving subjects to understand, that nothing was by that oath [the oath of supremacy] intended, but only to have the duty and allegiance that was acknowledged to be due to the noble kings, King Henry and King Edward, and was of ancient time due to the imperial crown of this realm: that is, under God, to have sovereignty and rule over all manner of persons born within her realms, either ecclesiastical or temporal, whatsoever they be. So as no other foreign power shall or ought to have any superiority over them."—*STRYPE'S Annals*, vol. i. p. 159.

In this sense, the queen is just as much the supreme governor over dissenters as over Churchmen. In other matters, however, the influence of the State over the Church is not so unobjectionable. If the State cordially aided the Church in its functions, this interference would be the less to be deplored; but such has been far from being always the case. Even in Elizabeth's reign, the Church continued to be impoverished rather than strengthened; and subsequent ages have many times had reason to deplore the fettered condition in which the Church is placed.

NOTE III. *Page 69.*

It appears that, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the bodies of persons of rank were preserved by salting, and afterwards enclosed in leather or hides.

This usage was discontinued about the commencement of the thirteenth century.

In this manner Hugh de Grentmesnel, who died A.D. 1094, was interred; his body having been salted and wrapt up in a hide.—*Vide* STRUTT.

A stone coffin was discovered in 1724, in the chapter-house at Chester Cathedral, containing a body enclosed in leather, supposed that of Hugh Lupus, who died A.D. 1101.—GOUGH, *Sep. Mon.*

Henry I. was sewed up in such an envelope: "Being dede, hys bowels were drawe oute of hys bodye, and hys brayne taken oute of hys heade, and the bodye salted withe moch salte, and, for to avoide the stenche that infected manye men, it was at last closed in a boole skynne."—*Polychronicon*, lib. vii. cap. 17, by CAXTON, cited in Strutt.

The corpse of Geoffrey de Magnaville, who died at Chester, A.D. 1165, was salted, and wrapped up in a leather.—GOUGH, *Sep. Mon.* vol. i. 49.

The remains of the Empress Maude, who died A.D. 1167, and was buried in the abbey of Bec, were found there in the year 1282, wrapped up in an ox's hide.—BOURGET, *Hist. of Bec.*

From the thirteenth century the bodies of the nobility were often regularly embalmed, and covered with cerecloths, and deposited in stone coffins, or lead or wood.

There is a stone coffin in Merevale Church, which we imagine was that occupied by Robert de Ferrers.

W. S. D.

Extract from Cradock's Literary and Miscellaneous Memoirs, p. 27.

“ We made a considerable stay at Merevale,—a place always rendered more agreeable to me than my wife; for I had an excellent library to refer to, and some management of the garden-ground: but it was to some rather dull; for I must confess that, on a close survey, the whole routine of the interior did not a little savour of the nunnery or the monastery. During one of my longer abodes there, I received an application from Lord Leicester, a learned antiquary, relative to an ancestor of his, who was buried in the churchyard, near the old abbey, in which he was pleased to enumerate many family particulars. ‘ He was (says his lordship), according to our records, deposited under a very large stone, in an ox’s hide, at so many feet from the wall of the corner,’—mentioning the exact distance from the ancient documents;—‘and I should take it a very particular favour (he adds), if you could obtain permission to make an accurate examination.’ I accordingly applied to Mrs. Stratford; and went, with her full consent, like Friar Lawrence, with a crow and spade, but no lantern, for it was in open day, and was attended by the clerk and sexton, and a few select friends, who anxiously awaited the result. We almost immediately struck upon the corner of an immense stone, not far from the surface, and at the precise distance that had been pointed

out. The lower end had considerably sunk: but I hesitated to proceed further; for it appeared to me to be a service of danger, as no faculty had been obtained from the ecclesiastical court; and I was legally informed afterwards, that the bishop of the diocese should be previously applied to, before any process, in taking up a corpse for examination, could be possibly permitted. I informed Lord Leicester of all the particulars; but various occurrences afterwards interfering, I believe his lordship's ancestor still remains safely and quietly deposited, *statu quo*, in his ox's hide."

NOTE IV. *Page 69.*

The following account, abridged from Dugdale, of the family of the founder of Merevale Abbey, has been removed from the text; but is here given as an illustration of the times when monasteries were founded, and shewing the necessity of such places of comparative safety and retirement from the sinful turbulence of the world.

"To him [Robert Ferrars, founder of the abbey] succeeded Willham, who held lxxix knights' fees: and to him another, Robert, of whom the first mention I find is in 19 Henry II., at which time (hearing how the king's territories in France were invaded by the young Henry, then in rebellion against his father), joining with the Earls of Chester, Norfolk, Leicester, and other great men here in England, in the like hostile actions, he manned the castles of Tutbury and Duffield against his sovereign. And not only so, but, raising the power of Leicestershire, marched early in the morning to Nottingham, which then was kept for the king by Reginald

de Luci ; and having, without any great difficulty, entered the town, burnt and plundered it, slaying and making prisoners most part of the inhabitants.

“ The year following, this rebellious baron was forced to submit to the king, then at Northampton, and render up the castles of Duffield and Tutbury, giving security for his future fidelity.

“ His son William confirmed the monks of Geroldon in the inclosed ground at Hethcote, and pasture for a hundred sheep there, which his father had given to them ; and added another piece of inclosure adjoining thereto, with pasture for two hundred sheep more, at six score to the hundred, five kine and a bull, and six oxen ; and in the first year of Richard I. gave to the monks of St. Denis in France, for the health of his soul, and the soul of Sibill his wife, one wax taper yearly, price xiii^d, as also a stag and a boar, in their proper seasons, to be sent thither annually, at the feast of St. Denis, by the messengers of him the said earl and his heirs. And likewise to the monks of Lenton all his right to the church of Woodham in Essex, especially for the health of the souls of those who were with him at the burning of Nottingham, which (belike) was the time that his father made such spoil there, as I have before exprest.

“ This William was outed of his earldom by Richard I. ; but, as it appears, was afterwards restored, and accompanied the king on his holy voyage [crusade], and died at the siege of Acon [Acre] A.D. 1190, leaving issue William, his son and heir.

“ Of the great misfortunes that befell this king in his journey home, I shall not here stand to tell, for as much as they are fully spoken of by the croniclers ; but

proceed to relate how that William of Ferrars rendered good service to the king, on his return to England, especially at the siege of Nottingham, which had been occupied by the abettors of John; and for his fidelity he was made choice of by the king to sit with the rest of the peers at the great council held there. At the second coronation of the said king, he was one of the four that carried the rich canopy over his head. Afterwards, when John came lawfully to the throne, he swore fealty to him, and was very loyal to him in his distresses; for when the pope had deposed him of his kingdom, and Pandulphus, his legate, came to treat with him, William earl of Ferrars was one of the four that gave his solemn oath for the king's performance of those articles whereunto he had submitted; and was witness to the charter of king John, whereby he gave up his realm to the pope. Of the king's favour to him the following is a singular instance, viz., that on the 27th of June following, he had a special grant to himself and his heirs to sit at dinner upon all festivals in the year, when they should solemnly celebrate those days, with his head uncovered, and without any cap, having a garland thereon, of the breadth of the said king's little finger. This worthy nobleman aided king John against the rebellious barons, and took by assault the castles of Bolsover and Pec [Peak], in Derbyshire, whereof by special grant he was made governor. After the death of John, he rendered good service to the young king, Henry III.; and in the second year of that king's reign he made a journey to the Holy Land with Ranulph earl of Chester, leaving his steward, Ralph Fitz Nicholas, to transact all businesses for him until his return from pilgrimage. The next observable

passage relating to this stout earl was, that, in a difference between the king and Richard earl of Cornwall (his brother), he took the part of Richard, and stuck not to put himself in arms against the king; but the king wisely perceiving that unavoidable mischief must ensue by clashing with his nobility, which were then so potent, fairly composed the business. Afterwards he was one of the three commissioners recommended by the barons to the king for the reconciling of certain discontents which had arisen from the violation of the Magna Charta, with which reconciliation the people were so well content, that they gave the king a thirtieth part of all their movable goods, excepting gold, silver, horses, and arms. At last, this good and just man died full of days; and in the same month he was followed to the grave by his countess, with whom (if my information be correct) he had been united in holy wedlock seventy-five years before by St. Thomas of Canterbury [Becket].

“To this earl succeeded William, his son, a discreet and good man, but sorely troubled with his father’s infirmity (the gout). What is chiefly memorable concerning him is his death, which happened to be violent: for being carried in a kind of chariot by reason of his gout, which, through the unskillfulness of the driver, fell off the bridge of St. Neots, his limbs were so broken and body bruised, that he quickly died thereof, and was buried at Merevale.

“Robert, his son and heir, had the ill hap to be the last earl of the family; for no sooner was he come to man’s estate, than meeting with a discontented nobility, who, under many fair and specious pretences, infused into him all principles of disloyalty, he became a most

malevolent man against the king; and having got a power of soldiers at his heels, he attacked and plundered Worcester, and destroyed the king's park thereabout; to retaliate which outrage the king sent Edward, his eldest son, down into Stafford and Derbyshire, with a good army, where he wasted his lands and manors with fire and sword, and demolished his castle at Tutbury. After various other adventures, too long to relate, this Robert of Ferrars lost his earldom, and died in poverty, possessing nothing of the inheritance which he had received from his forefathers, except the gout."

NOTE V. Page 76.

*Rules of the Cistercian Order, from FOSBROOKE'S
"British Monachism," page 112.*

"The Cistercians [are] Benedictines, according to the *letter* of the rule, without mitigation. Their peculiarities I shall give from Dugdale's *Warwickshire*, which I have compared with Malmesbury and Knighton. First, for their habits: they wear no leather or linen, nor indeed any fine woollen cloth; neither, except it be on a journey, do they put on breeches, and then, upon their return, deliver them fair washed. Having two coats, with cowls, in winter they are not to augment, but in summer, if they please, may lessen them; in which habit they are to sleep, and after matins not to return to their beds. For prayers,—the hour of prime they so conclude, that before the laudes it may be day-break; strictly observing these rules, that not one iota or tittle of the service is omitted. Immediately after laudes, they sing the prime; and after prime, they go out, performing their appointed hours in work. What

is to be done in the day they act by daylight; for none of them, except he be sick, is to be absent from his diurnal hours or the compline. When the compline is finished, the steward of the house, and he that hath charge of the guests, go forth, but with great care of silence serve them. For diet, the abbot assumes no more liberty to himself than any of his convent; every where being present with them, and taking care of his flock, except at meat, in regard his table is always with the strangers and poor people. Nevertheless, whensoever he eats, he is abstemious of talk, or any dainty fare; nor hath he or any of them ever above two dishes of meat; neither do they eat of fat or flesh except in case of sickness; and from the ides of September till Easter they eat no more than once a day, except on Sundays,—no, not on any festival. Out of the precincts of the cloister they go not but to work. Neither there nor any where do they discourse with any but the abbot or prior. In summer, after chapter, which follows prime, they work till tierce, and after nones till vespers; in winter, from after mass till nones, and even to vespers during Lent. In harvest, when they work on the farm, they say tierce, and the conventual mass immediately after prime, that nothing may hinder their work for the rest of the morning; and often they say divine service in the places where they are at work, and at the same hours as those at home celebrate them in the church. They unweariably continue their canonical hours [*i. e.* prayer seven times a day], not piecing any service to another, except the vigils for the deceased. They observe the office of St. Ambrose, so far as they could have perfect knowledge of it from Millain [Milan]; and taking care of strangers and such people, do devise extraordinary

affliction for their own bodies, to the intent their souls may be advantaged. Hospinian says thus of them : a year's probation ; no reception of fugitives after the third time ; all fasts observed according to the rule ; prostration to visiters, and washing their feet ; abbot's table always with guests and pilgrims ; labour more than the rule required ; delicate habits exploded ; obsolete and primitive fervour endeavoured to be revived by them. Avarice was the great vice of this order. They were great dealers in wool ; generally very ignorant ; and, in fact, farmers more than monks."

Such is Fosbrooke's account. It seems probable that very few monasteries were conducted for any length of time strictly according to their rules ; and that, even in those which were otherwise well-ordered and irreproachable, great relaxation of the prescribed discipline was permitted.

NOTE VI. *Page 77.*

Those who wish to see the formation of an establishment of monks may do so in Leicestershire, not far from the road between Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Loughborough. Here, in a wild and romantic spot on Charnwood Forest where the Whitwick rocks project their craggy summits from the barren hills, a few Cistercian monks have settled themselves, driven, as they say, from Bretagne, in France, at the Revolution of 1830. Their first establishment consisted of a few farm-buildings and a chapel, in which they perform divine service seven times in the day ; employing the remainder of their time in the cultivation of their estate, which consists of 250 acres of land. They are half farmers, half recluses. A large crucifix towers above the rest in the

middle of the farm-yard. This spot is destined eventually to be their grange; and at about a quarter of a mile distant, a monastery of considerable size is being constructed, which is intended to be their residence, and is capable of holding a large fraternity. A chapel, 140 feet in length, is to form one wing of the edifice. The whole of the new building is under the especial superintendence of Mr. Pugin, who, with a zeal worthy of a purer faith, is taking wonderful pains to make the whole establishment like in all respects to those of former days.

NOTE VII. *Page 107.*

The price of provisions, as fixed by statute in the reign of Henry VIII., was as follows:—

Beef, per pound	$\frac{1}{2}d.$
Pork	„	.	.	.	$\frac{1}{2}d.$
Mutton	„	.	.	.	$\frac{1}{2}d.$
Veal	„	.	.	.	$\frac{1}{2}d.$

The preamble of the statute says, that these four sorts of butcher's meat were the food of the poorer sort. In the year 1544, an acre of good land was let at a shilling or fifteenpence of our present money. See HUME, iv. 246.

The following are some items of expenditure at the funeral of Sir John Rudstone, who died A.D. 1531:

	£.	s.	d.
7 lb. of sugar	.	0	4 1
2 gallons of milk	.	0	0 3
60 egges	.	0	0 7½
Butter, per gallon	.	0	0 4½
16 pykes (fish)	.	1	1 4
10 swannes, at 6s. a pece	.	3	0 0

	£.	s.	d.
8 doz. of rabetts	0	6	6
2 doz. of quayles	0	10	0
22 capons	0	12	10
9 doz. of pygeons	0	7	6
A surloyne of beef	0	2	4
Half a vele (calf)	0	2	8
4 mary bones	0	0	8
3 barrels of ale	0	11	0
For double bere to the tabull	0	0	4
32 gallons of redde and claret wyne, at 10d. per gallon	1	6	8
A rundlett of muscadine	0	6	0
3 gallons of mackerey	0	0	4
6 unces of pepper	0	0	9
4 unces of clovys and mace	0	2	4
2 unces of saffron	0	1	10
18 lb. of pruenes	0	3	0
8 lb. of corans	0	1	8
12 lb. of sugar	0	7	0
5 unces of cynimion	0	1	3
4 unces of gynger	0	0	6
A peck and a half of salt	0	0	6
Packthrede and mustard	0	0	2
The cooke for hys labor and hys com- pany for 18 messes of meate	0	15	0
Paid the turners of broches (spits) and skulyans four of them	0	1	4

There are many other items for "candels, venyger," &c., but not so entered that the price of those articles can be estimated.

It is sometimes said, by way of accounting for the superior liberality of former ages in the building of churches, and the beautiful and solid manner in which

they are erected, that provisions and wages of labour were much cheaper than now. True; but they were not cheaper *in proportion to the amount of men's incomes*. On the contrary, the rent of land, and the incomes of both clergy and laity, appear to have been smaller in proportion, rather than larger. So that the erection of a church would cost those who bore the expense more in proportion to their incomes then than at the present time.

But, in truth, it is evident that in every age the price of provisions, the cost of labour, the value of property, and the incomes of individuals, will always bear a relative proportion to each other, with such variations only as the accident of supply and demand may for a short time produce. If the best land lets for a shilling an acre instead of forty shillings, the price of the produce, and the labour of the husbandman, will all be low in proportion.

NOTE VIII. *Page 127.*

A miraculous crucifix had been kept at Boxley in Kent, and bore the appellation of the "rood of grace." The lips, and eyes, and head of the image, moved on the approach of its votaries. Hilsey, bishop of Rochester, broke the crucifix at St. Paul's Cross, and shewed to the whole people the springs and wheels by which it had been secretly moved. A great wooden idol revered in Wales, called Darvel Gatheren, was also brought to London and cut in pieces; and by a cruel refinement in vengeance, it was employed as fuel to burn Friar Forest. See HUME, vol. iv. chap. xxxi. He quotes Goodwin's *Annals*; Stowe, p. 375; Herbert Baker, p. 286.

NOTE IX.

On Monastic Institutions.

Before concluding, I wish to add some brief observations on the monastic system, which perished in England with the papal power; but with regard to the revival of which much is said, and more hinted, in the writings of the present day.

It is clearly an erroneous impression to associate the idea of monasteries with the Roman Catholic Church *alone*; such institutions having existed long before the corruptions of popery were heard of, and being perfectly compatible with a reformed Church.

The true notion of monasteries, and other kindred institutions, is, that they are *societies of persons who have devoted themselves to a life of self-denial, charity, and the worship of God.*

The objection to which the monasteries of the middle ages were liable arose, not from their essential character as religious societies, but from their accidental connexion with a corrupt religion. The laxity of morals with which many of them are charged was attributable to their exemption from proper episcopal control, owing to the usurped authority which the pope exercised over all other bishops; and the various superstitions which abounded within their walls—the worshipping of saints, the offering masses for the dead, the impostures connected with relics,—all these existed in monasteries simply because their members were Romanists.

On the other hand, even when most charged with corruption and superstition, the religious houses were productive of many important benefits to society; con-

veying civilisation into remote and neglected districts; furnishing asylums, where pious persons might devote themselves to God, and those who were heavy laden with sin might seek Him in penitence and prayer: besides the benefit accruing to the Church from the continual prayers offered up by many faithful hearts.

Now, if we take a common-sense view of the question (for, in spite of the antipathy which some modern writers have to common sense, I will be no party to excluding it from such discussions), it is surely unreasonable to say that we may not have the advantages of such religious association, without these evils. The possibility of abuse is no argument against their legitimate use.

Besides, we have seen that the abuses arose from corruptions which have now ceased. And it does not seem just to argue that, because monasteries were corrupt under the Romanist system, they should be so when connected with a reformed Church. The abolition of the power of the pope, and the subjection of the monasteries to strict episcopal discipline, would be a safeguard, if not against the existence, yet at least against the continuance of abuses; and there would be no danger of monasteries being the nurseries of popish corruption, seeing that such corruptions have ceased to exist in our Church.

These objections being obviated, what should hinder such societies from being the instruments, and in a greater degree than heretofore, of all the good which has in former days resulted from them? No one can object to individuals or societies devoting themselves to works of piety and charity (supposing them really to do so), exercising self-denial, giving their time and their

money to the poor, and offering their daily prayers in the Church. We have already many societies more or less analogous to monasteries. One principal object of our cathedral-establishments, for instance, is like that of the monasteries—the offering up of daily prayers. If a number of individuals joined together and performed, without emolument, those services which our canons, prebendaries, and the members of cathedral-choirs perform *with* emolument, who could with justice utter a word of blame? Who, again, could object to Sisters of Charity, associated together for the purpose of rendering their aid, on religious principles, to the sick and afflicted; like the societies which exist, under that and other names, in France, and like the Beguines in Flanders, who, amidst even the horrors and persecutions of the revolution, obtained respect for their devotion and usefulness? We have also institutions called visiting-societies, consisting of persons who devote much of their time to the temporal and religious wants of the poor. If such persons worshipped together daily, and subjected themselves to stricter rules of discipline and obedience to their clerical superior than they do at present, who would have a right to blame them? And might not the feelings and tempers of such zealous persons be much sanctified and elevated, by joining together in the prayers of the Church, previously to engaging in the busy duties of active charity? Or, further; suppose that a number of zealous clergymen chose to associate together in colleges, and, under the sanction and control of the bishop, to devote their time and substance to reclaiming the neglected population of our great towns, who could for one moment raise his voice against them, because in some respects they

might be like the ancient monasteries? If the mass of our people is again to be brought into communion with the Church, it may well be doubted whether it must not be through the religious enthusiasm and devotedness of men who shall spurn all worldly views and considerations, and even comforts, and devote themselves, heart and soul, to the work of the ministry.

These are instances of the obvious usefulness to society, of which religious bodies, properly ordered, might be the instruments. And as usefulness is the prevailing motive of the present age, we may be excused in laying stress upon it. But there are other considerations besides mere usefulness, which may be admitted in the formation of such societies. We believe that the honour and glory of God is promoted by the devotion of souls to His service, and that the Church derives strength from the continued prayers of its righteous members. Nor must we omit to notice the benefit resulting to the souls of those who truly devote themselves to God. Surely, when we look at the world around us, we must be constrained to confess that there are multitudes of whom, if they remain until their life's end as they are, immersed in worldliness and frivolity, it is hard to believe, with the utmost stretch of charity, that they are in the way of salvation; and it would seem beyond a doubt, that nothing but the absolute wrenching themselves from the scenes and occupations in which they live is likely to enable them to turn their hearts to God. No doubt it is possible for worldly and sinful persons to repent and turn to God in the privacy of their own homes; and a person *may* be as much a saint, and exercise as much real self-denial, amidst the petty details of ordinary life, as in the re-

tirement of the cloister. Still, we all know the influence which change of scene, example, and association with others filled with the spirit of zeal, has over the minds and feelings of those who desire to break through a course of worldly vanity, and live to the glory of God. To such persons, in the absence of monasteries, our cathedral-towns even now offer facilities for devotion to God which do not commonly exist elsewhere. What can be imagined more suitable, in the present state of social life, to the case of those who find themselves fettered by worldly or sinful habits, and in vain endeavour to break through them; who long for a more spiritual mind, yet find the frivolities of society so beset them as to defeat all their efforts after holiness?—what, I say, can be more suitable, than for such persons to retire to the precincts of our cathedrals, where they may enjoy the privileges of public worship twice or thrice each day, and, by a constancy of religious association, gradually raise their souls to the contemplation of heavenly things, which now are seen but dimly and seldom, if at all? And if such persons should gather in any numbers in the closes of our cathedrals, why should they not join together and dwell as a society, united by certain rules and regulations, eschewing luxuries and self-indulgence, and devoting their substance to pious and charitable uses? I do not advocate superstitious or exaggerated discipline. An affected poverty, sordidness of living, and ostentatious austerity, such as one sometimes reads of in monastic institutions, seems to have resulted from the natural tendency of human nature to carry out even good principles and habits to excess. Many lamentable instances have occurred. Without saying that undue attention is not paid by

many persons in the present day to delicateness, not to say costliness of apparel, still no one will deny that personal cleanliness is a duty; and the neglect of this duty,¹ which, amongst many exemplary deeds of self-denial, we read of in such persons as La Mère Angélique, the young Abbess of Port-Royal, and the shocking particulars of the habits of Sister Providence,² must be considered as the effect rather of fanaticism (especially in the latter case) than religion. However, it is impossible to deny that the abandonment of the common luxuries of the world, and a life of self-denial and devotion to charitable and religious occupations, would be eminently suitable to the case of thousands of persons who now vainly long for exemption from the trammels with which the present state of society surrounds them.

If, however, institutions similar to monasteries were at any time to be revived in our reformed Church, there would be many points independent of abuses engendered by popery—many points perhaps indifferent in themselves—in which the founders of such societies must submit to the decision of their diocesan in the formation of their rules: such, for instance, as the propriety of binding themselves by vows; or the admission to such institutions of male persons in the prime and vigour of life. It is evident that a life of seclusion and prayer, which might be suitable to holy men advanced in life, or to the remorseful penitent, might be undesirable for zealous Christians in the fulness of strength and activity; and that the bishop might reasonably require that the active exertion and enthusiasm of such persons should not be given to retirement, in the present exigencies of

¹ See *British Critic*, No. LX., page 375.

² See *Quarterly Review*, Vol. XXXVI. p. 347; see also p. 329.

the Church. And, again, the abuses and inconvenience resulting from monastic vows have been proved, by experience, to be so great, as to make it doubtful whether the bishops of the reformed Church could prudently give their sanction to their revival. These, and other points, the revivers of monastic institutions must be content to leave to the decision of those whom God has set over them. While they may reasonably contend for the suitability of strict religious associations, for purposes of self-denial and Christian worship, to the necessities of the Church in this as in other ages, they must not only wholly dissociate them from the superstitions of popery, but also carefully avoid the possibility of similar abuses creeping in, by placing the institutions under the strict discipline of their spiritual rulers, and in harmony with the doctrines of our reformed faith.



